

Filing Case
Mrs P.

THE STORY OF A HOUSE

John G. Biel

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REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

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This is the story of a house — a house rich in historical value beyond the realizations of even its nearest neighbors — a house, unique and alone in its relation to the periods of history it embraces.

The history of this house is so interwoven with the lives of the people of early Terre Haute and so prominent in the events which occurred then, that it is a veritable diamond whose facets reflect every aspect of its contemporary life and times. If this story seems rambling, it is because there are so many ramifications to it, of necessity; it is because this house was the hub of the wheel of life and progress of early Terre Haute.

On October 3, 1811, with an Army of some 900 men, General William Henry Harrison moved out of the old Fort at Vincennes and reached the Wea Village which was at that time, where Terre Haute now stands. Just North of this little Indian Village he built the famous Fort Harrison. Soon after the decisive battle with Tecumseh, upon which so much of the history of the entire Northwest Territory is based, this portion of Indiana was opened to the eager coming of the settlers. Finally, Harrison's purchase from the Indians was opened for sale — beginning on the 2nd Monday in September, 1816, — and it was that first day, on the 13th of the month, that William Harlow purchased the land on which now stands the house you are to hear about.

William Harlow was a land buyer — as they called them in those days — and certainly did not intend to do anything with this land, except sell it to someone else, to make a profit.

All of the best lands near the Wabash River, which had not been reserved by the Government, or located by Canadian claimants, were sold at auction in September 1816. A very large tract of land of the second and third quality — much of which was very fertile and not much different from what was considered as the choice land — was left over after the auction and could be purchased for an entry fee of Two Dollars an acre, payable in

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installments over a period of four years -- one fourth within two years and the remainder in two equal annual payments. Eight percent interest was added to all delinquent payments but eight percent discount was also allowed for prompt payment. Thus lands paid for at the time of entry only cost one dollar and eight three cents an acre. Think of the real estate values in Terre Haute today and then consider that the town's pioneers purchased it for one dollar and eighty three cents an acre!

In order to help out those persons who could not make a payment in full -- or who wished to secure a tract of land while they were undecided as to a place to settle permanently -- an arrangement was made whereby lands could be entered for a certain number of days. This privilege was greatly abused however, since lands were entered for the sum of Sixteen Dollars -- which was one twentieth of the price -- and for this Sixteen Dollars the holder had the right to remove, within forty days, every valuable timber tree from the premises; and if no other purchaser appeared within that time, the term could be lengthened to ninety days. During the winter of 1817 to 1818 the average price of prairie lands about here was from five to ten dollars and the average price of woodlands was from two to five dollars. This credit system of purchase was abolished July 20th, 1820 and the minimum price reduced to one dollar and a quarter an acre.

Harlow did sell his land to a George W. Dewees and assigned his purchase rights to him. Mr. Dewees obtained a patent from the United States for this land -- the name applied to a deed from the Government -- signed by James Monroe, the then President, on September 22, 1823. Just at that time, Terre Haute was emerging on what could be called the second phase of its growth.

There is no official record of what is now Vigo County, Indiana from the time of the coming of the first settlers until about 1816. From 1812 to 1815 -- the time of War -- there were few, if any, immigrants who came this way.

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 to 1823 -- the time of war -- there were few, if any, immigrants the same old way.

The pursuits of peace, -- clearing lands, making farms and raising crops -- were interrupted by the War between England and America. This very locality was the seat of the War, as the English had gone among the Indians hereabouts using every inducement they could think of to bribe them to raise their arms and strike down the Americans who were trying to settle in this section.

It was only five years before the construction on this house was started, that Vigo County was formed. It was only six years before the construction on this house was started that Indiana became a state of the Union -- in 1816.

At the time Vigo County was first formed, it was quite large and included some of the present Parke County and some of the present Putnam County. It was not until 1821 -- just two years before this house was built -- that Putnam County and Parke County were carved out, which action remapped Vigo County considerably. For years there existed grave doubt as to the actual boundaries of Vigo County, the controversy not being legally straightened out until much, much later -- 1852, for the first time and again in 1873. In 1790 the region now known as Indiana and Michigan was organized into a county and named Knox in honor of General Knox. Other counties were organized from time to time from this territory until it was reduced to a narrow tract of land extending from the southern to the northern boundaries of the State. In 1817 a part of Knox County was organized into a county called Sullivan and in 1818 a portion of Sullivan County was carved out and organized into a separate county and named in honor of Colonel Francis Vigo.

Scattered over the county at that time, and even in the little town, was many a log cabin whose small square windows might be of glass or oiled paper, and whose wooden latch -- raised with a leather thong -- let one into a room with puncheon floor. The roof above was of long oak shingles hewn out with an ax, the chinks in the logs were filled with clay or clay and stones and the large fireplace was lined with stones. The chimney outside was built up

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Consolidated over the county at that time, and even in the little town,
 we may a lot of old whose small square windows might be of glass or tiled
 paper, and whose wooden latch — raised with a leather string — let one into
 a room with wainscot floor. The roof above was of long oak shingles laid out
 with an eye, the shingles in the logs were filled with clay or clay and stones
 and the large fireplace was lined with stones. The chimney outside was built up

with lathe and clay, and inside its ample mouth swung an iron pot from a crane. At one side was a spinning wheel or loom, sometimes both. For clothes and hat racks, many a house had the antlers of a deer killed by the settler. On pegs in the wall or in a corner, was the long rifle, with flint lock, because percussion caps did not come into general use until after the Mexican War.

Other articles were there that would cause us today to wonder at their use; the sieve of deerskin punched full of holes; the iron kettles for rendering lard in winter and for boiling maple sap in the spring; the ash barrel through which percolated the water to come out as lye for making soap or to steep the corn for hominy — all these homely domestic articles could be seen at any of the homes on the Vigo County prairie and in the little town of Terre Haute when this house was first started. There were, of course, the threshing floors in the barns or in the open where the men beat out the grain with flails or where horses or oxen walked round and round in a circle treading the seed from the straw.

Candles were burned, made by the women of the house and smoky-lard-oil lamps were a luxury. The people wore boots that even a boot jack would hardly pull off. In the high crowns of the men's hats, they carried their letters, papers and handkerchiefs. Nearly every man owned a pair of saddle bags to carry behind him and stout leggings coming to his knees to protect him from the brush, when he rode horseback on his journeys over the primitive highways.

Droves of fat hogs could be seen waddling through the streets from early winter until late spring. The farmer wives brought in rolls of Kentucky jeans and linseys, made on their spinning wheels and looms. Common articles of merchandise at the stores were indigo, madder and copperas, which dyestuffs account for the blue and butternut jeans. Dyes were also made from the hulls of walnuts, butternuts, and maple bark and from these the linseys and flannels were given the colors which prevailed throughout this pioneer community. The cotton chain, used in weaving cloth and carpet, was bought in the stores but

with Latin and clay, and inside the walls were an iron rod from a stove.
It was also a spinning wheel at foot, sometimes both. For clothes and hats
made, many a house had the spindle of a new mill by the roadside. On the
in the wall or in a corner, was the long table, with flint lock, because
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Other articles were those that would come up today to consider as
their use; the stove of domestic painted with oil of paint; the iron kettle for
rendering lard in winter and for boiling maple sap in the spring; the ear
bowl through which percolated the water to come out as the for making soap
to steep the corn for hominy -- all these domestic articles could
be seen at any of the houses on the Vicks County prairie and in the little town
of Fort Hunt when this house was first started. There were, of course, the
kitchen floor in the house or in the open where the men beat out the straw
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Gardens were found, made by the women of the house and empty-lard-oll
hops were a luxury. The people were people that even a foot path would hardly
pass off. In the high rooms of the men's house, they carried their fiddlers,
pianos and backbones. Nearly every man owned a pair of saddle bags to
carry behind him and about looking coming to his house to protect him from the
bears, when he was downback on his journey over the prairie bluffs.
Boxes of fat pork could be seen walking through the streets from
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otherwise these articles were entirely homemade.

As the second phase of Terre Haute's growth started, the logs were hewn instead of being left round and additional rooms were added to the houses. The settlers were becoming more permanent. Stores and trading stations were springing up; shipments of pork and grain were made down the river to New Orleans on boats built right here for that purpose, the boats being later sold at their destination for lumber.

Our house is historically significant to Terre Haute and Vigo County as it marks, definitely, the beginning of the real building and development of the city.

On October 25th, 1816 the plat of the original town of Terre Haute was recorded by the original proprietors, who had formed a company to acquire the land on which Terre Haute now stands from Joseph Kitchell. He entered the land -- comprising 416 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres -- on September 13th, 1816, the same day as the land was entered on which the house of our storey stands. The original town of Terre Haute was bounded on the north by Eagle Street, on the East by Fifth Street, on the South by Swan Street and on the West by Water Street. The town, then encompassed thirty five blocks, one of which was reserved for the public square, one fourth of another reserved for a Church and one fourth of another for a Seminary. The blocks were divided into 268 lots, each 141 feet 2 inches in depth and 74 feet 7 inches frontage except four which were 66 feet and 7 inches frontage. The streets were laid out sixty five feet wide, except Water, First, Second, Wabash and Ohio which were made 81 feet 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and Third or Market Street which was made 99 feet and 5 inches wide. The original plat of the town was recorded in Knox County -- At Vincennes -- as there was no County Government set up here and no Recorders Office in which to record the plat. It appears in Knox County Deed Record A, Vol. 1, page 457. Later, on March 24th, 1819, after the County Government was established here it was recorded in Vigo County and appears in Vigo County Deed Record Vol. 1, page 94.

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 On October 25th, 1815 the plat of the original town of Terre Haute
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 the land on which Terre Haute now stands (see Joseph Kitchell). He entered the
 plat -- comprising 150 acres -- on September 13th, 1816, the same day as the
 land was entered on which the house of our story stands. The original town of
 Terre Haute was bounded on the north by Main Street, on the east by Fifth
 Street, on the south by Swan Street and on the west by Water Street. The town,
 then encompassed thirty five blocks, one of which was reserved for the public
 square, one fourth of another reserved for a church and one fourth of another
 for a cemetery. The blocks were divided into 360 lots, each 141 feet 2 inches
 in depth and 74 feet 7 inches frontage except four which were 66 feet and 7
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At the time our house was built, it was a long way out of town — being built at what is now the corner of 13th and Poplar Street. Our house was the first stone house to be built in this vicinity. It was started in 1823 but was not completed until 1826.

There were only about fifty houses in the town when our house was first built — most of them of hewn logs but many of them still the old original one room, round log, dirt floor, windowless cabin we know so well as belonging to the early pioneer. The Western Register and Terre Haute Advertiser — Terre Haute's first newspaper — said in 1823 — the year our house was started — that there were fifteen business houses in this town of fifty buildings. This certainly indicated that a large population resided about the town and in the country, because the fifty houses in the town would not, by themselves, support fifteen businesses.

The first dry goods and grocery store was opened on the corner of Poplar and First streets. This is variously attributed to John Earle and to Lucius Scott. Whoever had it, we do have recorded that the stock consisted of sugar, coffee, salt and whiskey, a few bolts of calico, a small stock of unbleached muslin and a few trinkets for the Indian trade. George Hussey started the next store on Walnut Street between First Street and Water Street and George W. Devees — the man who built our house — later started a store on the second lot south of Ohio Street on the West Side of Second Street. His store was a one room, round log building with a one storey frame building behind it where he and his family lived until they moved to our house. He is listed in the newspaper in 1823 as "G. W. Devees, cash, corn or beeswax".

At the southeast corner of Second and Walnut was Robert Brasher's home and hatter shop. On two corners of Second and Poplar were two large hewn log houses. Between First and Second Street on either Swan or Oak was the log jail.

The first brick house, except the court house, was built by Benjamin I. Gilman and was also the office of the first pork packing business, which was

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The first dry goods and grocery store was opened on the corner of Poplar and First streets. This is variously attributed to John Kaine and to Julius Scott. Whoever had it, we do have recorded that the stock consisted of sugar, coffee, salt and whiskey, a few bolts of calico, a small stock of unbleached muslin and a few trunks for the Indian trade. George Hensley started the next store on Walnut Street between First Street and Water Street and George W. Powers -- the man who built our house -- later started a store on the second lot south of Ohio Street on the West Side of Second Street.

His store was a one room, round log building with a one story frame building behind it where he and his family lived until they moved to our house. He is listed in the newspaper in 1823 as "G. W. Powers, cash, corn or beer."

At the southeast corner of Second and Walnut was Robert Wheeler's home and butter shop. On the corners of Second and Poplar were two large hewn log houses. Between First and Second Streets on either Oak or Oak was the log jail.

The first brick house, except the court house, was built by Benjamin I. Gilman and was also the office of the first pork packing business, which was

a big business in Terre Haute in those days. It was built at First and Mulberry Street. John Britton built a brick house at First and Poplar in 1825 and George W. Noble built one at Main and First sometime later. The first brick school was built at First and Walnut in 1827.

What is the present South Fifth Street was the eastern edge of the Town in the year this house came to life, and then that was "out in the woods". The old burial ground was outside of the town - then - in the square just east of South Sixth Street between Wabash Avenue and Ohio Street. Curtis Gilbert afterward built his house right in the middle of this cemetery. Tradition has it that he built his house here so he could look out over the grave of his wife. However, history records that he built this house for his second wife and moved in it with her. Women have not changed that much even in that many years and certainly his second wife either did not know of this reason, or it was not the reason for this choice of locations. I am afraid Mrs. Curtis Gilbert the Second -- certainly having a mind of her own -- would have had something to say about looking out on the final resting place of her predecessor, day in and day out.

The second burial ground established for this growing little city was on a small hill north of the town overlooking the River -- just west of the present Water Street. The buildings of the American Can Company are now located on that spot.

When our house first started its career, roads and paths crossed and recrossed this little town at all conceivable angles. There were only a few fenced fields east of the town on the prairie -- which was the land we now know as between Sixth Street and Deming Park, where the first hills start on the east side of the city. The principal road then, was the Vincennes Road which left Second Street at Poplar and angled southwest to the corner of First and Oak, then running directly south to Vincennes.

There were only a few wells in the town then. Most of the people carried their water from the springs which, at that time, gushed out from the

The first was one of them and they sometimes later. The first with some
west. John Burton built a brick house at First and Taylor in 1897 and George
his business in Toronto House in those days. It was built at First and Malborough

What is the present South Fifth Street was the business edge of the town in the year this house came to life, and then that was "out in the woods". The old burial ground was outside of the town - then - in the square just west of North Sixth Street between Fourth Avenue and Fifth Street. Tradition has it that he built this house here as he would look out over the grave of his wife. However, history records that he built this house for his second wife and moved to it with her. Women have not changed that much even in that many years and certainly his second wife either did not know of this reason, or it was not the reason for this choice of location. I am afraid Mrs. Charles Olcott the second was certainly having a mind of her own - well have had something to say about looking out on the final resting place of her predecessor, day in and day out. The second burial ground established for this growing little city was on a small hill north of the town overlooking the River - just west of the present Water Street. The buildings of the American San Company are now located on that spot.

There were only a few wells in the town then. Most of the people carried their water from the springs which, at that time, gushed out from the bottom of the hills. The principal road then, was the Vincennes Road which led to the city. The ground at Taylor and angled southwest to the corner of First and Oak, and then running directly south to Vincennes.

River bank. The Indians lived, more or less permanently, at that time, in a settlement just north of the town near the Old Indian Orchard. There were only a few families then and they were, on the whole, friendly and peaceful.

The year this house was started, is again significant to us today, for it was that year the first steamboat arrived on the River. It was named the "Florence", and it landed at the old boatyard, then located at the foot of Oak Street at the River bank.

From the time this house was started - 1823 - to the time it was completed - 1826 - the progress of Terre Haute changed. It began to grow. There is no record of any Chamber of Commerce at that time but something promoted the city. From a sleepy little river village it began to grow into a city of importance. A great many new families came to Terre Haute at that time, families whose descendants, today, are among the leaders of the social and business life of the city.

I want you to have a picture of conditions here at the time our house was built. At the time it was built, our house was a mansion. There was nothing like it in the country for hundreds of miles in any direction. It was a brave gesture to build so magnificent a house in the backwoods, which was then Terre Haute. It was justified, however, and our house, although mellowed with the years as the great city has grown up around it, stands today bravely defying time's efforts to erase it as a landmark of an era, which it most certainly is.

Fate did not decree Mr. Dewees was to have this land long. He started to build a house - a substantial and even pretentious one - and tried to build it along the pattern of houses he knew - those in and about French New Orleans. He wanted a stone house and there was very little stone about here. However, he owned an interest in a stone quarry someplace north - it is believed in and around the present Turkey ^{Bm} or Mudlavia - and brought the stone from there by ox-cart to build his house. The winters were very cold here for Mr. Dewees's southern type house, but he persisted and finally completed his house at the end of three years.

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(8)
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bank of the river bank.

The land about this house, which at that time belonged to the grounds, took in the territory which is now bounded by 13th Street on the West; 20th Street on the East; Poplar Street on the North and College Avenue on the South. The barn stood on the spot now occupied by St. Patrick's Church.

Our house sits well back from the street. When the side street — thirteenth and one-half — was opened, it was necessary to take out a part of the large circular brick walk which went around the entire house. With this west side taken out, the balance is still intact — the original bricks laid by Major Dewees' workmen.

The main house stands some 6 feet above the ground with a long flight of steps leading to the front veranda. The front entrance door is of immense width leading into a wide roomy hall on either side of which is a large square room. When the house was first built there was no connection, from the inside, between the first and second floors. Later a small staircase was cut into the corner of the hall.

The old brick areaway at the back of the house has now been enclosed to make additional rooms.

The walls of this house are some 18 inches thick, growing much wider as they reach the ground — the rock foundation on which the house rests being seven feet out from the walls.

The floors are of black walnut boards — tongue and grooved and fitting today as tight and flat as if just laid. There is not one nail in them. The rafters and joists are, in reality, beams — they are so large — all hand hewn and put together with wooden pegs, not one of which has ever loosened.

You have all seen this house — its large second story porch extending clear across the front of the house — its first floor being half in the ground and half out and its large, dignified rooms each with its own fireplace. The mantels of these fireplaces are thought to be original Adam mantels.

The land about this house, which at that time belonged to the government, look in the territory which is now bounded by 13th Street on the West; 20th Street on the East; Poplar Street on the North and College Avenue on the South. The house stood on the spot now occupied by St. Patrick's Church.

Our house after well back from the street. When the side street -- sidewalk and one-half -- was opened, it was necessary to take out a part of the large oval-shaped cellar which went around the entire house. With this part also taken out, the balance is still intact -- the original pattern laid by Major Dwyer's workmen.

The main house stands some 6 feet above the ground with a long flight of steps leading to the front entrance. The front entrance door is of limestone with leading into a wide roomy hall on either side of which is a large square room. From this house was first built there was no connection, from the inside, between the first and second floors. Later a small staircase was put into the corner of the hall.

The old brick driveway at the back of the house has now been enlarged to make additional rooms.

The walls of this house are some 18 inches thick, growing much thicker as they reach the ground -- the rock foundation on which the house rests being seven feet out from the walls.

The floors are of black walnut boards -- tongue and groove and fitted today as tight and flat as if just laid. There is not one nail in them. The rafters and joists are, in reality, beams -- they are no joists -- all hand hewn and put together with wooden pegs, not one of which has ever loosened.

You have all seen this house -- its large second story porch extending over across the front of the house -- its first floor being half in the ground and half out and its large, dignified rooms each with its own fireplace. The windows of these fireplaces are thought to be original when new.

Major George W. Dewees was of French descent. He, his wife and son came to Terre Haute up the water route from New Orleans where — it was more than rumored — he had been engaged in the slave trade, and became very wealthy. He came overland, by waggon train from a point below what is now Evansville as freight and passenger boats had not yet traveled the Wabash River.

He is reported to have been a follower of Robespierre when he lived in France, and at his downfall, had to flee the country, along with many others, from the new government. He settled first in Pennsylvania with his two brothers and sister, later going to New Orleans.

Major Dewees was a very important man in this growing little community. He was very wealthy, for that day, and took an active part in Civic and Community life. He was President of the Trustees of the Public Library which had been started in this town, gradually taking on the more serious aspects of a little community, as in the old issues of the Western Register — for the year 1823, when he was in the process of building his house — there appeared several notices signed by him as President of the Library Board — which, by the way, had the cultural benefits of seven hundred volumes to give to the people of this little community. He ran a general store, both here and at Paris, Illinois and was one of the stockholders of the new Branch Bank.

In spite of all this, he was not at all liked. Captain William Earle, who was born in the little village of Terre Haute in 1818 — was five years old at the time Major Dewees started to build his house, and was eight years old at the time the house was completed — in writing of his early recollections of the place, wrote: "Major George W. Dewees was a grim old man, thick set, with iron gray hair and whiskers, small eyes and a very sour look. He was universally unpopular. His two ferocious white dogs made him most of his reputation with boys of my age. All that glitters is not gold and somebody is said to be painted blacker than he is; so with the old Major. He was better than he was represented to be. I know of his furnishing a poor young woman with money to

represented to be. I know of his furnishing a poor young woman with money to painted blacker than he is; no with the old major. He was better than he was boys of my age. All that matters is not gold and somebody is said to be unpopular. His two ferocious white dogs made him most of his reputation with from grey hair and whiskers, small eyes and a very stern look. He was universally the place, wrote: Major George W. Deane was a grim old man, thick set, with the time the house was completed -- in writing of his early recollections of at the time Major Deane started to build his house, and was about years old at who was born in the little village of Terre Haute in 1818 -- was five years old in spite of all this, he was not at all liked. Captain William Latta, was one of the stockholders of the new branch bank. little community. He ran a general store, both here and at Paris, Illinois and the original doctrine of never rendered witness to give to the people of this notices signed by him as President of the Library Board -- which, by the way, had 1883, when he was in the process of building his house -- there appeared several a little community, as in the old issues of the Western Register -- for the year had been started in this town, gradually taking on the more serious aspects of Community life. He was President of the Trustees of the Public Library which He was very wealthy, for that day, and took an active part in Civic and Major Deane was a very important man in this growing little community. and sister, later going to New Orleans. He settled first in Pennsylvania with his two brothers in finance, and at his death, had to like the country, along with many others. He is reported to have been a follower of Robespierre when he lived fighting and passenger boats had not yet traversed the Wabash River. some overland, by wagon train from a point below what is now Evansville as was limited -- he had been engaged in the slave trade, and became very wealthy. was to Terre Haute up the water route from New Orleans where -- it was more Major George W. Deane was of French descent. His wife and son

pay her passage from Louisville to Terre Haute, and even refusing to be thanked."

We can trace Major Dewees to Terre Haute first in 1820. He must have come in May of that year because in the old ledger of Demas Deming, who had a general store in Terre Haute in those days, George W. Dewees is listed as a customer first on May 15th, 1820. Certainly, if he had been here prior to that he would have appeared on the books of the town's best store. It is significant to our search, that the first entry on Mr. Deming's books in Mr. Dewees' account is an advance of cash in the sum of Ten Dollars. Certainly after a trip such as George Dewees and his family had made from New Orleans here, he would be short of cash. The next day—May 16th, 1820—there appears an entry in Mr. Deming's books that he paid \$162.78 in cash to "waggoners" for Mr. Dewees, indicating beyond a doubt, that Mr. Dewees's household goods and personal belongings had followed him and the carrier had to be paid. Then appeared, in the next few days, items on Mr. Deming's books of lumber, screws, hinges and other building supplies and another item of \$118.87 paid to "waggoners" for Mr. Dewees. Major Dewees, as he was called, was settling in the community. He was building his store and house on South Second street and soon he did not appear any longer on Mr. Deming's books as he had opened his own store and was holding himself out to the community as a dealer in "cash, corn and beeswax".

In the U. S. Census for ~~the~~ Indiana taken in 1820, George W. Dewees is shown in Terre Haute as the head of a family consisting of one male between the ages of 10 and 16 years of age, two males between the ages of 26 and 45; one female under 10 years old; one female between 10 and 16 years of age and one female between 16 and 26 years of age. This census also shows he had three colored female slaves. Who all these people were, there is no way of knowing. Certainly Mr. Dewees had no more than one child, because there is no mention anywhere of other than one child. These other people listed in the census of 1820 must have been workers at his store and in his household. So far as the three colored slaves are concerned, the constitution of Indiana in 1816 abolished slavery so far as the State of Indiana was concerned. By the act of

abolished slavery as far as the State of Indiana was concerned. By the act of
three colored slaves are concerned, the constitution of Indiana in 1816
1820 must have been written at his store and in his household. So far as the
multiples of other than one child. These other people listed in the census of
certainly Mr. Dewart had no more than one child, because there is no mention
colored female slaves. Who all these people were, there is no way of knowing.
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the ages of 10 and 16 years of age, two males between the ages of 16 and 20;
is shown in Terre Haute as the head of a family consisting of one male between
In the U. S. Census for the Indians taken in 1830, George H. Dewart
holding himself out to the community as a dealer in "cash, corn and beans."
appear any longer on Mr. Dewart's books as he had opened his own store and was
he are building his store and house on Fifth Second street and soon he did not
Mr. Dewart. Major Dewart, as he was called, was settling in the community.
other building supplies and another item of \$116.75 paid to "Dewart" for
the next few days, items on Mr. Dewart's books of lumber, saws, shingles and
belongings had followed him and the matter had to be paid. Then appeared, in
Dewart's books that he paid \$162.78 in cash to "Dewart" for Mr. Dewart,
short of cash. The next day—May 16th, 1830—there appears an entry in Mr.
as George Dewart and his family had made from New Orleans here, he would be
in an advance of cash in the sum of ten dollars. Certainly after a trip such
to our country, that the first entry on Mr. Dewart's books in Mr. Dewart's account
is would have appeared on the books of the town's best store. It is significant
another first on May 15th, 1830. Certainly, if he had been here prior to that
mutual store in Terre Haute in those days, George H. Dewart is listed as a
was in May of that year because in the old ledger of James Dewart, who had a
He can trace Major Dewart to Terre Haute first in 1820. He must have
by her passage from Louisville to Terre Haute, and even refusing to be thanked."

1807 of the Indiana Territorial Legislature, owners of negroes and mulattoes over fifteen years of age were authorized to bring them into the Territory and have them bound to service by indenture for such a time as the master and the slave might agree upon. If the slave would not agree to indenture, his owner was allowed sixty days in which to remove him to any state where slavery existed. Most negroes at that time could neither read or write and many signed indenture agreements knowing nothing about them at all; in fact, their circumstances changed little, if any, after the ceremony of indenture.

In the Census for Indiana taken in 1830, ten years later, George W. Dewees is still shown as head of a family but now it is composed of only one female — who had to be his wife because we know that they were together at that time — and three males, one five to 10, one 20 to 30 and one 50 to 60. What happened to the other males and other females and the three negroes in that ten years, no one knows.

It is very interesting to search out the footprints of people long gone from this world. They are found in the most unusual and interesting places. In trying to trace Mr. Dewees to Terre Haute, I found a receipt in the estate of Mr. Aspinwall, one of the original proprietors of the town of Terre Haute — a very wealthy man — where Mr. Aspinwall's Executors had paid our George W. Dewees \$4.06 for a shroud for Mr. Aspinwall. Mr. Aspinwall died late in 1820 and was a very prominent and influential man. The fact that his family went to Mr. Dewees' store for a shroud instead of Mr. Deming's or some of the other older stores in the town, indicates that Mr. Dewees had risen fast in the community, because it was less than six months before, that he had to borrow money from Mr. Deming to pay the freight bill for his furniture and obtain material on credit to open his store.

Mr. Dewees had an interest in the Jones Store at Paris, Illinois and when he died, Mr. James Jones of Paris was one of his Administrators. He had an interest in a stone quarry north of Parke County and he had some business interests in Jefferson County, Kentucky.

1857 of the Indiana Territorial Legislature, owners of negroes and mulattoes over fifteen years of age were authorized to bring them into the territory and have them bound to service by indenture for such a time as the master and the slave might agree upon. If the slave would not agree to indenture, his owner was allowed thirty days in which to remove him to any state where slavery existed. But negroes at that time could neither read or write and many signed indenture agreements knowing nothing about them at all, in fact, their circumstances changed little, if any, after the ceremony of indenture.

In the Census for Indiana taken in 1830, ten years later, George W. Dimes is still shown as head of a family but now it is composed of only one family — who had to be his wife because a widow that they were together at that time — and three males, one five to 10, one 10 to 20 and one 20 to 30. That happened to the other males and other females and the three negroes in that ten years, no one leaves.

It is very interesting to search out the footprints of people long gone from this world. They are found in the most unusual and interesting places. In trying to trace Mr. Dimes to Terre Haute, I found a receipt in the estate of Mr. Applewell, one of the original proprietors of the town of Terre Haute — a very wealthy man — where Mr. Applewell's Executors had paid out George W. Dimes \$1.00 for a shroud for Mr. Applewell. Mr. Applewell died late in 1830 and was a very prominent and influential man. The fact that his family went to Mr. Dimes' alone for a shroud instead of Mr. Dimes' or some of the other other stores in the town, indicated that Mr. Dimes had taken part in the community, because it was less than six months before, that he had to borrow money from Mr. Dimes to pay the freight bill for his furniture and obtain material on credit to open his store.

Mr. Dimes had an interest in the Kansas Store at Paris, Illinois and when he died, Mr. James Jones of Paris was one of his Administrators. He had an interest in a stone quarry north of Evans County and he had some business interests in Jefferson County, Kentucky.

He was, all in all, a very important and influential man although he was always in trouble with someone. He hardly had settled in Terre Haute until he was in and out of court, for one thing or another, time and again. Court had just been formed in Terre Haute when our Mr. Dewees was fined \$3.00 with costs of \$15.47½ on October 23, 1821. He was fined time and again and he sued many people himself. Of course, he owned a store and necessarily had bad accounts on his books. In those days money was not plentiful and it was difficult to pay accounts promptly. Everything from corn to hogs, walnuts and maple syrup were taken in payment of debts. In the old newspapers of that day, Doctors, and even the newspaper owners themselves, posted notices that they would accept a few bushels of apples in payment of debts for a short while, or that they would accept a few bushel of walnuts, or a pig, or two, or corn, etc.

Major Dewees - at that time in his early fifties - with his lovely wife Matilda, who not yet 30 years old, and his young son, moved into his beautiful new house sometime in the year 1827. He had a high, heavy wooden fence built all around his property and the neighbors never felt welcome there. His dogs were not friendly, but in defense of the Major, it must be remembered ^{was} that he/nearly a mile from town and the Indians were not to be trusted. He was literally in the wilderness and was left alone by the other people of the town.

This house, which is so closely knitted with the history of Terre Haute, was not to prove friendly to the Major. Within seven years of the time the family moved into the house all three were dead! At least two were dead and one was never heard of again!

The young son of the Major and Mrs. Dewees was scalped by the Indians one night in one of their uprisings and from that time on the Major and his wife kept more and more to themselves, having little, if anything, to do with their neighbors or the people of Terre Haute.

The mansion--for it was a mansion in those days--was called "The Lawn". In the papers of the Jenkes family collection is a note which reads as follows:

He was, all in all, a very important and influential man although he
was always in trouble with women. He hardly had settled in Terre Haute until
he was in and out of court, for one thing or another, time and again. Court had
just been formed in Terre Haute when Mr. Bewess was fined \$5.00 with costs of
\$2.50 on October 25, 1821. He was fined time and again and he sued many
people himself. Of course, he owned a store and necessarily had bad accounts
in his books. In these days money was not plentiful and it was difficult to
get accounts promptly. Everything from corn to logs, wheat and maple syrup
were taken in payment of debts. In the old newspapers of that day, Doctors,
and even the newspaper owners themselves, quoted notices that they would accept
a few bushels of wheat in payment of debts for a short while, or that they
would accept a few bushels of wheat, or a pig, or wool, or corn, etc.
Major Bewess - at that time in his early thirties - with his lovely
wife Matilda, who was not yet 30 years old, and his young son, moved into his
beautiful new house sometime in the year 1827. He had a high, heavy wooden
fence built all around his property and the neighbors never felt welcome there.
The dogs were not friendly, but in defense of the Major, it must be remembered
that he had nearly a mile from town and the Indians were not to be trusted. He was
literally in the wilderness and was left alone by the other people of the town.
This house, which is no longer left with the history of Terre Haute,
was not to prove friendly to the Major. Within seven years of the time the
family moved into the house all three were dead! At least two were dead and one
was never heard of again!

The young son of the Major and Mrs. Bewess was reared by the Indians
one night in one of their wigwags and from that time on the Major and his wife
kept more and more to themselves, having little, if anything, to do with their
neighbors or the people of Terre Haute.

The mansion - for it was a mansion in those days - was called "The Lawn".
In the papers of the Jones family collection is a note which reads as follows:

"Mrs. Dewees' compliments to Mr. Jenkes and will be greatly obliged to him for a few tomatoes for the purpose of making catsup, pickles, etc. provided he has them to spare. The Lawn, Sept. 25th, 1830."

This note adds one more interesting association to our house.

In 1830 tomatoes were rare. They were cultivated in that early time only as curiosities and were thought by many to be poisonous. Still here is the lady of our house seeking out tomatoes to make into catsup and pickles.

From the records it is possible to find today, affairs seemed to be running smoothly in our house at that time. There is no record of just when trouble started brewing, but less than two years after Mrs. Dewees' friendly note about the tomatoes, she was divorced, her husband, the old Major was in jail charged with murder and Mrs. Dewees was never seen again.

On March 15th, 1832 there appears in Deed Record # 3 of the old records in the Recorder's Office of Vigo County a copy of an agreement entered into by George W. Dewees and John D. Early for and on behalf of Matilda Dewees, reciting that by mutual consent George and Matilda agree to live apart, George agreeing to pay to Matilda \$2300.00 by \$600.00 in cash at that time and executing four notes amounting to \$1700.00 to be secured by a mortgage and also George agrees to give to Matilda "all paintings, pictures, articles of dress, plate and household furniture which she, the said Matilda may desire or select".

This agreement was carried out and George executed a mortgage to John D. Early "for and on behalf of Matilda Dewees, wife of George W. Dewees" on five tracts of land including the farm and the lots on South Second Street where his store was located.

If Matilda took any of the household goods, George must have had considerable because in the inventory of his estate, filed in court, just three years later, is listed a complete household including silver plate and furnishings. In passing, it will be of interest to those of you who are antique

"Mrs. Dwyer's complaint to Mr. Jones and will be
greatly obliged to him for a few papers for the
purpose of making copy, which, etc. provided
he has them to spare. The Law, Sept. 1830."

This note adds one more interesting association to our names.

In 1830 Dwyer was born. They were educated in that early time only
in common and were thought of only to be common. Still there is the
day of our home seeking out houses to make into farms and places.

From the records it is possible to find today, affairs seemed to

be running smoothly in our house at that time. There is no record of just

when trouble started brewing, but less than two years after Mrs. Dwyer

kindly note about the trouble, she was divorced, her husband, the old father

as in 1831 charged with murder and Mrs. Dwyer was never seen again.

On March 12th, 1832 there appears in Book Record 4 of the old

records in the Recorder's Office of Vigo County a copy of an agreement entered
into by George W. Dwyer and John D. Barry for and on behalf of Matilda Dwyer,
testifying that by mutual consent George and Matilda agree to live apart, George

agreeing to pay to Matilda \$2500.00 by \$500.00 in cash at that time and

executing four notes amounting to \$1700.00 to be secured by a mortgage and
also George agrees to give to Matilda all personal, fixtures, articles of
furniture, plate and household furniture which she, the said Matilda may desire

in subject.

This agreement was carried out and George executed a mortgage to

John D. Barry for and on behalf of Matilda Dwyer, wife of George W. Dwyer
on five acres of land including the farm and the lot on South Second Street

where his store was located.

If Matilda took any of the household goods, George must have had

considerable means in the inventory of his estate, filed in court, just three

years later, he listed a complete household including silver plate and

furniture. In passing, it will be of interest to those of you who are anxious

collectors, that his inventory reads as if it were the latest Hobbies Magazine. The inventory included four glass Decanters appraised at \$1.00 each; six wine glasses at 48¢; 12 Windsor chairs at \$12.00; one shot gun at \$8.00; one Cherry cupboard at \$5.25; one High Post Cherry bedstead at \$10.00; one cherry wash stand with bowl and pitcher at \$4.00 ; one cherry bureau at \$18.00; one cherry stand at \$5.00 and numerous other articles, all of which would be nearly priceless today.

To get back to the Dewees family -- Matilda was never heard of or seen after this agreement was signed.

Two months after signing this agreement, George filed suit for a divorce -- which was rather unusual and a little rash, in those days when divorce was not nearly so common as it is today -- and was granted a divorce, the court record reciting "but the defendant - Matilda - although called, comes not, but makes default". That was in May 1832, and on November 7th, 1832 -- just six months later -- George was in jail.

The issue of the local newspaper -- The Wabash Courier -- of November 8th, 1832, which carries at the top a by-line to the effect that "The editor is still so far confined by indisposition as to preclude his attending to editorial duties for the current week", carries the following news story:

"An unfortunate occurrence took place in this town, On Tuesday morning last, which though duty requires us to notice it, we should, under existing circumstances, comment upon with delicacy. On the evening previous, some differences having arisen between Capt. James Wasson and Maj. George W. Dewees, in which the latter considered himself insulted, he challenged Capt. Wasson to meet him in the street (being in Wasson's home) which was declined. Early on Tuesday morning, Maj. Dewees repaired to Capt. Wasson's armed with a pistol, and, meeting him on the porch, fired at him, at a distance of about six feet,. Wasson, who was turning at the instant, received the ball about the middle of the back, which entered in an oblique direction, ranging from the right to the left, partially downward, toward the kidneys. His surgeons consider the wound dangerous, though the result is yet uncertain. The ball has not been found, and it is uncertain where it has lodged. The Circuit Court, being now in session, Dewees is held in custody, to wait the result."

collectors, that his inventory reads as if it were the latest Hobbes Magazine. The inventory included four glass decanters appraised at \$1.00 each; six wine glasses at 45¢; 12 Windsor chairs at \$12.00; one shot gun at \$25.00; one cherry cupboard at \$2.25; one high top cherry bedstead at \$10.00; one cherry wash stand with bowl and pitcher at \$4.00; one cherry bureau at \$12.00; one cherry stand at \$2.00 and numerous other articles, all of which would be nearly priceless today.

To get back to the Powers family — Matilda was never heard of or

seen after this agreement was signed.

Two months after signing this agreement, George filed suit for a

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the court record reading "that the defendant — Matilda — although called, came

not, but taken default". That was in May 1832, and on November 12, 1832 —

just six months later — George was in jail.

The issue of the local newspaper — The Wabash Courier — of November

22d, 1832, which carries at the top a headline to the effect that "The editor is

will no longer continue by indisposition as to preside in attending to

editorial duties for the current week", carries the following news story:

"An unfortunate occurrence took place in this town, on Tuesday morning last, which though duly reported as to notice it, we should, under existing circumstances, comment upon with delicacy. On the evening previous, some differences having arisen between Capt. James Nasson and Maj. George W. Dawes, in which the latter considered himself insulted, he challenged Capt. Nasson to meet him in the street (being in Nasson's home) which was declined. Early on Tuesday morning, Maj. Dawes repaired to Capt. Nasson's armed with a pistol, and, meeting him on the porch, fired at him, at a distance of about six feet. Nasson, who was turning at the instant, received the ball about the middle of the back, which entered in an oblique direction, ranging from the right to the left, partially downward, toward the kidneys. His surgeons consider the wound dangerous, though the result is yet uncertain. The ball has not been found, and it is uncertain where it has lodged. The District Court, being now in session, Dawes is held in custody, to wait the result."

Major Dewees was denied bail by the court and was held in the little log jail until November 15th. Captain James Wasson did not die, and on that day Dewees was charged with Assault and Battery with intent to commit murder and released on bail of \$4,000.00 which was given by John H. Watson and Ralph Wilson after Dewees had given them a mortgage on everything he owned, which was not mortgaged to Matilda.

There is nothing recorded as to the reasons Major Dewees shot Captain Wasson. Captain James Wasson's name was very familiar to early Terre Haute. He came from Connecticut in 1816 and had charge of the early tavern or hotel. The tavern was commonly known as the Wasson House and afterward became the famous Eagle & Lion. It was built of hewed logs on the southeast corner of First and Wabash. Wasson had been a sailor before he came to Terre Haute. He was somewhat brusque in manner but very kind and was universally liked. In 1828 when the Presbyterian Church was first organized here, he was elected one of the first trustees along with William C. Linton and John Britton.

It may be significant in drawing conclusions and making speculations to note that the same Tuesday morning this shooting occurred was election day. Jackson was running against Clay for President and although Jackson was elected, Vigo County went for Clay. The vote in Vigo County stood 637 for Clay and 425 for Jackson, giving a majority to Clay of 212. Whether this fact should be given preference in our conclusions or whether we should give preference to the family entanglements of the Major -- the separation, the divorce, the disappearance of Matilda, the differences in the ages of Matilda and the Major -- all occurring within six months of the shooting -- is a matter of personal preference only and subject to individual considerations so far as history is concerned.

When Major Dewees' case was called in the May Term of the Court in 1833 it was venued to Parke County for trial. The trial was held at Rockville on August 19th, 1833 before John R. Porter, President Judge of the First

on August 19th, 1893 before John A. Ford, President Judge of the First
1893 it was vanned to Parks County for trial. The trial was held at Rockville
When Major Dwyer's case was called in the May term of the Court in
so far as history is concerned.

Matter of personal preference only and subject to individual considerations
and the Major -- all occurring within six months of the shooting -- is a
reference to the family entanglements of the Major -- the separation, the
should be given preference in our conclusions on whether we should give
Clay and Art for Jackson, giving a majority to Clay of 218. Whether this last
elected, Clay County went for Clay. The vote in Vigo County stood 511 for
Jackson was running against Clay for President and although Jackson was
to vote that the same Tuesday morning this shooting occurred was election day.
It may be significant in showing consistency and making speculations
included one of the first trustees along with William C. Linton and John Kirtson.
In 1898 when the Presbyterian Church was first organized here, he was
found. He was somewhat drunk in manner but very kind and was universally
order of first and second. Jackson had been a soldier before he came to Terre
before the famous Eagle Legion. It was built of heavy logs on the exterior
of poles. The tavern was commonly known as the Eagle House and afterward
into. He came from Connecticut in 1816 and had charge of the early tavern
Captain Jackson. Captain James Jackson's name was very familiar to early Terre
There is nothing recorded as to the reasons Major Dwyer shot

was not supposed to be killed. The Major was not in the
than after Dwyer had given them a carriage on everything he owned, which
he retained on bill of \$4,000.00 which was given by John H. Watson and Ralph
Dwyer was charged with assault and battery with intent to commit murder
all until November 1891. Captain James Jackson did not die, and on that
Major Dwyer was killed by the court and was held in the little

Judicial Circuit of the State and Robert Mitchell and Dansey Seybold, Associate Judges of the County. Dewees pleaded "Not Guilty". After a trial — the evidence of which is not available to us today since no record was kept of testimony in those days — the jury brought in their verdict; "We, the jury, find the defendant guilty of an assault and battery and assess his fine at \$50.00; signed John Shook, Foreman".

On August 23, 1833, Dewees paid his fine plus court costs of \$61.91 and was a free man again.

From the time Dewees went to jail until his death, he never took an active part in his business or in the life of Terre Haute. In the newspapers of the day appeared several notices signed by Geo. W. Dewees, from time to time, to the effect that "All things relating to my farm are left in the care of John H. Watson, Esq. and all mercantile transactions are in the care of Ralph Wilson, Esq."

Dewees was very ill during the winter of 1833 and his niece, Elizabeth Patterson came to keep house for him. He recited this fact in his will and gave it as the reason for leaving to Elizabeth Patterson one half of his estate.

The next thing, chronologically, which affects our house is a suit brought May 6th, 1834 by John D. Early for Matilda Dewees against George Dewees on one of the notes which he hadn't paid. Early received the money and George paid the court costs of \$4.83 but Matilda never did appear.

In the issue of the Wabash Courier which came out on December 4th, 1834 appears this notice: "Died: At his residence, near this town on Saturday morning last — November 29th, 1834 -- Major George W. Dewees, aged 58 years, for many years a resident of Vigo County".

George Dewees' will was probated in court on April 21st, 1835. It is a peculiar will but typical of the character we have come to know as the Major. The will proper is not dated but a codicil is dated February 18th, 1834 and was written in Louisville, Ky., just before he started out from there to

Official Chronist of the State and Robert Mitchell and Henry Seybold, Associates
Judges of the County. Deceit placed "Not Guilty". After a trial -- the
evidence of which is not available to us today since no record was kept of
testimony in these days -- the jury brought in their verdict, "No, the jury
find the defendant guilty of an assault and battery and assess the fine at
\$50.00, against John Brock, Foreman".
On August 23, 1833, James paid the fine court costs of \$61.91
and was a free man again.
From the time James went to jail until his death, he never took an
active part in his business or in the life of Terre Haute. In the newspapers
of the day appeared several notices signed by Geo. W. James, from time to
time, to the effect that "all things relating to my farm are left in the care
of John H. Watson, Esq. and all mercantile transactions are in the care of
John Wilson, Esq."
James was very ill during the winter of 1833 and his notice, Elizabeth
Watson came to keep house for him. He resided this first in his will and gave
it as the reason for leaving to Elizabeth Watson one half of his estate.
The next thing, chronologically, which reflects our James is a will
drawn up May 6th, 1834 by John D. Early for William James against George
James on one of the notes which he hadn't paid. Early received the money and
George paid the court costs of \$6.83 but William never did appear.
In the issue of the Indiana Courier which came out on December 4th,
1834 appears this notice: "Filed at this residence, near this town on
Saturday morning last -- November 29th, 1834 -- before George W. James,
and 25 years, for many years a resident of Vigo County".
George James' will was probated in court on April 21st, 1835. It
is a peculiar will and typical of the character we have seen so often as the
story. The will proper is not dated but a codicil is dated February 1834, 1834
and was written in Louisville, Ky., just before he started out from there to

come home. He must have carried his will with him on his trips because the codicil is written on the bottom of the original. His will reads:

"In the name of God Amen: I, George W. Dewees considering the uncertainty of this mortal life & being of sound mind; blessed be almighty God for the same, do make and publish this my last will and testament in manner and form foll.g (that is to say) I give, bequeath and devise unto my dear sister Ann Potts, now residing in Schukill-Haven, in the State of Pennsylvania, one half of my real property, situated in the State of Indiana, about one half of a mile from Terre Haute, also one half of the lands that I possess in Vigo County — the situation will be ascertained by examining the patents left in my Port Folio, they being a part of my valuable papers; the remaining part of my real property, also personal (Subject to only one exception) I bequeath & devise to my dear niece Elizabeth Patterson who now resides here & who nursed me with unremitted attention last winter when attacked by a violent and dangerous disease. My sense of gratitude impels me to do what I have expressed, believing and hoping that my relations at a distance who are more nearly connected to me by the ties of consanguinity will approve of this act. The exception referred to is my silver plate, which is given to my sister, Ann Potts. I give nothing to either of my brothers. The oldest treated me with unrepresented cruelty in Philadelphia in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighteen, the other being independant in his circumstances appears to me to require nothing at my hands. I appoint Elizabeth Patterson my niece, executrix. James Jones of Paris, Ill. one of my executors & Daniel Johnson of Terre Haute, the other, the two last are to receive from the mass of my estate one hundred and fifty dollars each as a compensation for their trouble. All my just debts are to be discharged immediately if possible. There is sufficient capital invested at Paris, Ill. under the firm of J. Jones & Co. to discharge all & a handsome balance left in my favor. I hereby revoke all former wills by me made. In order to prevent a sacrifice of my real property I wish it retained for one or two years. My sister and niece however must receive in order to support them \$200 per year each, which the plantation will readily yield. As I am in daily conversation with E. Patterson & she as a matter of course knowing my business better than any other individual, I wish much attention to be paid to what she may suggest as to time and terms concerning the sale of my real property. Signed, sealed, published and declared by the above named Geo. W. Dewees to be his last will and testament in the presence of us who have herunto subscribed our names as witnesses in the presence of the testator.

Witnesses { Geo. B. Morrison
{ Elisha Applegate

Geo. W. Dewees.

CODICIL TO THE WITHIN WILL

About to set out for the State of Indiana in a few days hence, I believe it to my duty & know it of course to be my wish that my sister as named in the within and niece here, E. Patterson, should possess my property as herein discribed, subject to all the rules and regulations laid down— the only difference I now make is, that instead of James Jones of Paris, & D. Johnson on Terre Haute, is

and some. It must have occurred to me with this on the lips because the

subject is written on the bottom of the original. His will reads:

"In the name of God Amen: I, George W. Jones, considering the uncertainty of this mortal life & being of sound mind; blessed be almighty God for the same, do make and publish this my last will and testament in manner and form following (that is to say) I give, bequeath and devise unto my dear sister Ann Foster, now residing in Detroit-Haven, in the State of Pennsylvania, one half of my real property, situated in the State of Indiana, about one half of a mile from Terre Haute, also one half of the lands that I possess in the County — the situation will be ascertained by examining the patents left in my Port Folio, they being a part of my valuable estate; the remaining part of my real property, also personal (subject to only one exception) I bequeath & devise to my dear friend Elizabeth Patterson who now resides here & who I have with permitted attention last winter when attacked by a violent and dangerous disease. My name of Elizabeth Jones as to what I have expressed, believing and hoping that my relations at a distance who are more nearly connected to me by the ties of consanguinity will approve of this act. The exception referred to is my sister Jane, which is given to my sister Ann Foster. I give nothing to either of my brothers. The oldest treated me with ingratitude & cruelty in Philadelphia in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixteen, the other being independent in his circumstances appears to me to require nothing at my hands. I appoint Elizabeth Patterson my executors, executrix, James Jones of Paris, Ill. one of my executors & Daniel Johnson of Terre Haute, the other, the two last are to receive from the mass of my estate one hundred and fifty dollars each as a compensation for their trouble. All my just debts are to be discharged immediately if possible. There is no will of capital invested at Paris, Ill. under the firm of J. Jones & Co. to Elizabeth all a handsome balance left in my favor. I hereby revoke all former wills by me made. In order to prevent a mortification of my real property I wish it retained for one or two years. My sister and niece however must receive in order to support them \$200 per year each, which the executors will readily yield. As I am in daily conversation with E. Patterson & she as a matter of course knowing my business better than any other individual, I wish much attention to be paid to what she may suggest as to time and terms concerning the sale of my real property. Signed, sealed, published and declared by the above named Geo. W. Jones as he last will and testament in the presence of us who have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses in the presence of the testator.

Geo. W. Jones.

(Geo. W. Patterson

(Witness

(Elizabeth Applegate

CODICIL TO THE WITHIN WILL

Albion is not out for the State of Indiana in a few days hence. I believe it to my duty & mine it of course to be my wish that my sister as named in the within and above named, E. Patterson, should possess my property as herein directed, subject to all the rules and regulations laid down — the only difference I now make is, that instead of James Jones of Paris, & D. Johnson of Terre Haute, in

that I formerly appoint D. L. Chambers of Louisville & Wm. Early, of Terre Haute, with the same compensation as the two first were allotted to have, as my executors after my death to dispose of or retain my property until it will sell for a fair price, hereby revoking all other and former wills or testaments by me heretofore made.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this eighteenth day of February eighteen hundred and thirty four.

In presence of:

Daniel C. Banks

Geo. W. Dewees

(Seal)

Geo. W. Kinney

Louisville, Jefferson County, Ky. SS:

Geo. W. Dewees, this day personally appeared before the undersigned Justice of the Peace for said county, and acknowledged and declared the foregoing will & codicil to be his last will and testament.

Given under my hand this 18th day of Feby. 1834.

Daniel C. Banks,
(J.P. J.C.)

My last will and testament signed and witnessed this day Aug., Aug. the sixth, 1833.

Geo. W. Dewees

You will notice he makes no mention of Matilda or of any children. Matilda, by that time, had not been seen by anyone for over four years.

Early brought suit for her but she did not appear. In May, 1835, just after the will was probated, Eliza Linton, for herself and the minor heirs of William Linton, brought suit against the heirs of George Dewees to obtain a deed to certain land formerly owned by the Major and joined Matilda in that suit. Matilda did not appear but Early released her claim for her. Later, on Oct. 29, 1835, Early receipted a note for Matilda which was filed in the George Dewees estate, but still no one had ever seen Matilda.

This is all there is of record relating to the first family of our house. There was a story circulated that Matilda had been seen in France but the recorded facts leave ample room for speculation and conjecture and you may draw conclusions as well as anyone.

that I formerly appointed J. L. Chambers of Louisville & Wm. Early, of Texas Hunt, with the same compensation as the two first were allotted to have, as my executor after my death to dispose of or retain my property until it will sell for a fair price, hereby revoking all other and former wills or testaments by me heretofore made.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this thirteenth day of February, A.D. 1835, and thirty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America.

In presence of:
Daniel G. Banks
Geo. W. Lindsey
Geo. W. Lindsey
(Seal)

Louisville, Jefferson County, Ky., 1835

Geo. W. Lindsey, this day personally appeared before me, the undersigned Justice of the Peace for said county, and acknowledged and declared the foregoing will to be his last will and testament.

Given under my hand this 13th day of Feb'y, 1835.

Daniel G. Banks
(J.P. &c.)

My last will and testament signed and witnessed this day 1835.
Geo. W. Lindsey

You will notice he makes no mention of Matilda or of any children.

Matilda, by that time, had not been seen by anyone for over four years. Early brought suit for her but she did not appear. In May, 1835, just after the will was probated, Miss Hunter, for herself and the minor heirs of William Hunter, brought suit against the heirs of George Lindsey to obtain a deed to certain land formerly owned by the latter and joined Matilda in that suit. Matilda did not appear but Early obtained her claim for her. Later on Oct. 20, 1835, Early executed a note for Matilda which was filed in the George Lindsey estate, but still no one had ever seen Matilda.

This is all there is of record relating to the first family of our

name. There was a story circulated that Matilda had been seen in France but the recorded facts leave ample room for speculation and conjecture and you may draw conclusions as well as anyone.

It is interesting to note one significant thing, however, in connection with all these speculations on the disappearance of Matilda Dewees. You will note that this house Mr. Dewees built was done carefully, with great precision and attention to detail. Its every door, window, joist, and board match carefully and are fitted exactly. The fireplaces are twins — the one in the east room on the east wall being exactly matching the one in the west room on the west wall — only with one exception. Consider why this one exception should have been made — or was it made?

Both fireplaces here extend out from the wall a good five feet and are solid from the floor to the ceiling. The fireplace in the west room has a cupboard built into each side of the chimney about 2½ feet wide and about 6 feet tall and about 2½ feet deep. These cupboards have doors on them and contain shelves and are used to this day for storage and for books. The fireplace in the east room being a twin of the west one has a cupboard on the north side and — but that is just the point — it has none on the south side. A space matching the cupboard on the north — large enough to hold a human body — has been bricked up solid from the floor to the ceiling on the south side — and Mrs. Dewees was never seen or heard of again!

Mrs. Natalie Preston Smith, the present owner of this fabulous house has wondered about the lack of the matching cupboard and has let her curiosity take her so far — but not far enough. Mrs. Smith one day with a poker, pried in between two of the bricks on the south side of this east chimney — where the cupboard should have been if it ever was — and got her poker in past the thickness of the brick and found empty space. A space deep enough and wide enough to match the depth and width of the twin cupboard on the north side is in back of that bricked-up wall. When she withdrew the poker, a dank, musty odor likened to that from a dark, aged crypt came with it. Mrs. Smith has never gone further. She is tempted — but is fearful of what she may find.

It is interesting to note one significant thing, however, in connection with all these speculations as to the disappearance of the bodies. The fact is that Mrs. Brown had been carefully watching the great kitchen and attention to detail. The fireplace, and board were carefully and are fixed exactly. The fireplace was built — the one in the west room on the east wall being exactly matching the one in the west room on the west wall — only with one exception. Consider my wife's one exception should have been made -- or was it made?

Both fireplaces were situated at right angles from the west wall and the solid from the floor to the ceiling. The fireplace in the west room has a cupboard built into each side of the chimney about 4 feet wide and about 6 feet tall and about 2 feet deep. These cupboards have doors on them and certain shelves and are used as a safe day for storage and for books. The fireplace in the east room being a twin of the west one has a cupboard on the north side and -- but that is just the point -- it has none on the south side. A space matching the cupboard on the north -- large enough to hold a human body -- has been cut out up solid from the floor to the ceiling on the south side -- and Mrs. Brown was never seen or heard of again!

Mrs. Betts Weston Smith, the present owner of this building, having been wondered about the lack of the matching cupboard and has let her architect take her as far -- but not far enough. Mrs. Smith one day with a pencil, tried in between two of the bricks on the south side of this east chimney -- where the cupboard should have been if it ever was -- and got her finger in past the thickness of the brick and found empty space. A space deep enough and wide enough to wrap the height and width of the twin cupboard on the north side is in back of the chimney wall. When she withdrew the finger, a dark, muddy color seemed to show from a dark, muddy cavity some six inches deep. She is puzzled -- but is fearful of what

That, my friends, is the story of our house — the house at 1339 Poplar Street, Terre Haute, Indiana -- which even today gives rise to comments and rumors of being haunted. The story of a house which is truly stranger than fiction -- but much more fascinating than many fictions. It is the story of a house which is rich in tradition and steeped with the history of this City. It is the story of a house which under absolutely no circumstances should be lost to the generations of people of Terre Haute to come. This house is the one and only remaining link which ties today with the period of Terre Haute's growth which it represents, and it is most certainly a duty and obligation on the residents of this city and county to do something to preserve this house for posterity. It should, by all that is right and just, belong to the people of this City. It should be in the custody of some organization such as the Daughters of the American Revolution or of the Vigo County Historical Society, as a sacred trust, to preserve it intact and as it is. Over one hundred and twenty four years have passed since the construction of this house was started and it has withstood time and weather for only one purpose -- to link today with yesterday, to give to the people of today some idea of the heritage of the past which is theirs. Some effort should be made to protect and preserve this link with the past. Another hundred and twenty four years cannot pass with this house remaining as it is, unless some effort on the part of interested persons is made. Consider it seriously, but more than that -- do something about it!

There is a time -- nine years to be exact -- before the next period in the history of this house starts -- the time which elapsed from the time Major Dewees died in December, 1834 until this house was acquired by Nathaniel Preston in March 1843. This later period, then, is continuous, as the present owner and occupant -- Mrs. Natalie Preston Smith -- is the granddaughter of that early Nathaniel Preston.

Upon Major Dewees' death, his house passed by his will to his sister,

That, my friends, is the story of our house -- the house of 1839
 after Oliver, Terry House, Indiana -- which every day gives rise to comments
 and remarks of being haunted. The story of a house which is truly strange
 and fiction -- but much more fascinating than any fiction. It is the
 story of a house which is rich in tradition and steeped with the history of
 the city. It is the story of a house which under absolutely no circumstances
 should be lost to the generations of people of Terre Haute to come. This
 was in the one and only remaining link which ties today with the period of
 the House's growth which is representative, and it is most certainly a duty and
 obligation on the residents of this city and county to do something to preserve
 this house for posterity. It should, by all that is right and just, belong to
 the people of this city. It should be in the custody of some organization
 such as the Department of the American Revolution or of the City County
 Historical Society, as a sacred trust, to preserve it intact and as it is.
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 idea of the heritage of the past which is theirs. Some effort should be made
 to protect and preserve this link with the past. Another hundred and twenty
 four years cannot pass with this house remaining as it is, unless some effort
 on the part of interested persons is made. Consider it seriously, but more
 than that -- do something about it!
 There is a time -- nine years to be exact -- before the next period
 in the history of this house starts -- the time which elapsed from the time
 Major Bowen died in December, 1844 until this house was occupied by Daniel
 Preston in March 1845. This later period, then, is continuous, as the present
 owner and occupant -- Mrs. Isabelle Preston Smith -- is the granddaughter of
 that early Nationalist Preston.
 Upon Major Bowen's death, his house passed by his will to his sister,

Ann Potts of Schuylkill-Haven, Pa. and his niece Elisabeth Patterson who later married a David Potts. The relationship of Elisabeth Patterson and her Aunt Ann Potts is a strange one. Nothing much is known about them but although Ann Potts was a resident of Schuylkill-Haven, Pa., at the time of Major Dewees' death, she didn't stay there long, as there is a record of her death at Plainfield, Indiana on September 6, 1849 — just fifteen years after she inherited one half of this fabulous house. Ann Potts' husband was named Samuel and she had been married previously to the Major's death. Elisabeth Patterson was not married when she inherited half of this house, but was married, less than six months afterwards — on May 21, 1835 to David Potts. Whether David — Elisabeth's husband — and Samuel — Ann's husband — were brothers, or father and son, or some other relationship — or none, has been the subject of much speculation, but at least it is one more thing which adds to the mystery and interest attaching to this house.

The Major's estate was not settled until 1841, and even then not until his Administrators had been cited by the Court for failure to do so. But before that time Ann and Elisabeth needed some money, so they mortgaged this house for \$2515.00 to one John K. Watson. That mortgage was never paid, but was assigned to Dennis Deming in 1838, he eventually acquiring title to the house in 1843. Before Mr. Deming acquired the title, however, Elisabeth and her husband David needed some more money, so they sold out their interest to Ann for \$6,000.00 — remember the Dewees Farm as it was then known consisted of a great stone mansion, a detached servants' quarters, a large barn and several out-buildings, another small dwelling and 160 acres of land. Ann — within six months — sold the place to a man named Hitchcock who apparently didn't buy the place for a residence but for speculation, since within six months he sold it to another man by the name of Hitchcock for nearly twice what he paid for it. This latter Hitchcock didn't seem to want it for a residence either, since in the November 27, 1841 issue of the Western Register, he advertised it for sale, calling attention in the advertisement to the

The estate was not settled until 1841, and even then not all his administrators had been cited by the Court for failure to do so.

It before that time Ann and Elizabeth needed some money, so they mortgaged the house for \$250.00 to one John K. Watson. That mortgage was never paid,

and he assigned to James Lansing in 1838, he eventually acquiring title to the house in 1843. Before Mr. Lansing acquired the title, however, Elizabeth and her husband David needed some more money, so they sold out their interest in it for \$6,000.00 — remember the Dimes Farm as it was then known contained a great stone mansion, a detached servants' quarters, a large barn and several out-buildings, another well dwelling and 100 acres of land. Ann — within six months — sold the place to a man named Hitchcock who apparently didn't buy the place for a residence but for speculation, since within six months he sold it to another man by the name of Hitchcock for nearly twice what he paid for it. This latter Hitchcock didn't seem to want it for a residence either, since in the November 27, 1841 issue of the Western Register, advertised it for sale, calling attention in the advertisement to the

"Stone Mansion House". Demas Deming later bought the property, as he already held the mortgage.

It is apparrent Demas Deming bought the house to assist his friend and co-worker Preston, because, within eleven days of the date Deming bought it, he transferred it to Nathaniel Preston for a consideration of \$6,000.00 of which Mr. Preston paid \$500 at the time. Mr. Deming took a mortgage back for \$5,500.00, which was paid off by Mr. Preston in 1850. At this time Mr. Deming was the President of the T. H. Branch Bank and Mr. Preston was the cashier.

In 1834, just shortly before Major Dewees died, the Terre Haute Branch Bank was organized. The directors were Demas Deming, Chauncey Rose, Curtis Gilbert, J. Sutherland, J. D. Early, James B. McCall, David Linton and Samuel Crawford. Demas Deming was chosen president and James Farrington cashier. Major Dewees was one of the subscribers to the stock but died before the stock was issued to him. There are receipts in his estate file showing payments made by his executors to the bank on the stock subscription price.

The bank was housed in the building we know today as the G. A. R. Hall on the south side of Ohio Street just opposite the Court House. The cashier lived in the back rooms of the bank, as a part of his job was to act as caretaker of the money and the premises.

Nathaniel Preston came to Terre Haute from Vermont and was one of the first teachers at the old brick school. He taught there until he entered the Bank as a clerk and was afterward elected cashier.

Who lived in our house from the time of Major Dewees' death until Mr. Preston bought it and moved in to make his home, is not known. If anyone lived in it, it certainly was not for long because it changed too often for any roots to grow.

Nathaniel Preston and his wife, the former Charlotte Wood, lived here all of their lives and reared their family here. Later Margaret Preston

These Hamilton House. James Deane later bought the property, as he already
all the mortgage.

It is apparent James Deane bought the house to enable his friend
to - James Deane, however, within eleven days of the date Deane bought
it transferred it to National Trust for a consideration of \$25,000.00
which Mr. Preston paid \$2500 at the time. Mr. Deane took a mortgage back
for \$22,500.00, which was paid off by Mr. Preston in 1880. At this time Mr.
Deane was the President of the T. H. Bank and Mr. Preston was the

cashier.
In 1884, just shortly before Mr. Deane died, the T. H. Bank
which had been organized. The directors were James Deane, Charles Deane,
John Deane, J. D. Kelly, James H. McCall, James Deane and
James Deane was elected President and James Deane was elected
for Deane was one of the directors to the stock but died before the stock
was issued to him. There are receipts in his estate for the stock payments
made by his executor to the bank on the stock subscription paper.

The bank was located in the building we now know as the T. H. Bank
on the north side of Oak Street just opposite the Court House. The
banker lived in the back room of the bank, as a part of his job was to act
as caretaker of the money and the premises.

National Trust came to T. H. Bank from Vermont and was one of
the first teachers at the old brick school. He taught there until he entered
the bank as a clerk and was afterward elected cashier.

Who lived in our house from the time of Mr. Deane's death until
Preston bought it and moved in to make his home, is not known. If anyone
lived in it, it certainly was not for long because it changed too often for

to trace to grow.
National Preston and his wife, the former Charlotte Wood, lived
all of their lives and reared their family here. Later Margaret Preston

and her brother lived here until their deaths at which time it was inherited by Mrs. Smith who lives here at the present time in the summers, spending her winters in Florida.

This house, in addition to its rich and varied direct history, has many interesting associations with the life of other people in the community, whose historical relics are a part of, and belong to, this house.

Mrs. Charlotte Wood, a pioneer of early Terre Haute came to the town in 1835, just the year after Major Dewees died. She was a widow at the time and had three sons and six daughters. Her husband, John Wood, a native of London had died, and about the only income she had was a pension which had been granted to her because of her husband's service in the War of 1812. She reared her family well and they married and settled in Terre Haute. From this family spring names very familiar to the social and civic life of the present Terre Haute. The second daughter of Mrs. Wood married Nathaniel Preston and became mistress of the house of our storey -- the famous Dewees Mansion. Mrs. Wood's eldest son, William Maxwell was one of the most famous of our distinguished Naval Medical Officers.

He was born in Maryland and appointed from there May 16th, 1829 entering the Naval service as Assistant Surgeon. He had several posts one of the more important ones being on the Schooner GRAMPUS with the West India Squadron in 1832 and 1833. After several other posts he was appointed Fleet Surgeon to the Pacific Squadron from 1844 to 1846. During this period he rendered such a distinguished service to his country that there is recorded in the archives of the Navy an official document address to him by Commodore Sloat, then Commander-in-chief of the Pacific Squadron in which he says in part; "I am most happy to acknowledge the very importance services you rendered the government, and the Squadron in the Pacific, under my command, at the breaking out of the Mexican War. The information you furnished me at Mazatlan, from Guadalajara -- at the risk of your life -- was the only reliable

and her brother lived here until their death at which time it was inherited
 by Mrs. Smith who lives here at the present time in the summer, spending her
 winters in Florida.
 This house, in addition to its rich and varied direct history, has
 very interesting associations with the life of other people in the community,
 whose historical value is a part of, and belongs to, this house.
 Mrs. Charlotte Wood, a pioneer of early Texas history came to the town
 in 1832, just the year after Major Lawrence died. She was a widow at the time and
 had three sons and six daughters. Her husband, John Wood, a native of London
 was dead, and about the only income she had was a pension which had been granted
 to her husband of her husband's service in the war of 1812. She worked her
 land very well and they carried and settled in Texas. From this family
 spring names very familiar to the social and civic life of the present Texas
 State. The second daughter of Mrs. Wood married Benjamin Preston and became
 mistress of the house of our story — the famous Preston Mansion. Mrs. Wood's
 eldest son, William Maxwell was one of the most famous of our distinguished
 naval heroes.
 He was born in Maryland and appointed from there May 15th, 1839
 to the Naval service as Assistant Surgeon. He had several years one of
 the more important ones being on the Indian Ocean with the West India
 Squadron in 1839 and 1840. After several other posts he was appointed Fleet
 Surgeon on the Pacific Squadron from 1844 to 1846. During this period he
 rendered such a distinguished service to his country that there is recorded
 in the archives of the Navy an official document addressed to him by Commodore
 Lord, then Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Squadron in which he says in
 part: "I am most happy to acknowledge the very important services you
 rendered the Government, and the Squadron in the Pacific, under my command,
 and the breaking out of the Mexican War. The information you furnished me at
 Mexico, from Guadalupe — at the risk of your life — was the only reliable

information I received of that event, and which induced me to proceed immediately to California, and upon my own responsibility to take possession of that country. I have always considered the performance of your journey through Mexico at that time as an extraordinary feat, requiring great presence of mind and address. How you escaped from the heart of an enemy's country and such a people has always been a wonder to me and has been so characterized on all occasions".

Just consider -- connected with this remarkable house is a man without whom the great State of California and in fact the whole of the North West would not have been a part of our country. The Chairman of the Naval Committee of the Senate commented upon William Maxwell Wood's valuable services in the following words: "Every intelligent mind must at once appreciate the importance of the service which you have rendered the country, and your personal hazard in traveling through the heart of the enemies' country, communicating with your military superior and furnishing him with the sole and other wise unattainable information upon which he based the acquisition of California. The importance of this acquisition can best be estimated by asking ourselves, what would have been our natural position in the Pacific and upon our Oregon frontier had Great Britain, instead of ourselves, acquired permanent position of it? I always contended that its acquisition constitutes one of the navy's strongest claims upon the gratitude of the Nation, and this Chapter in its history, furnished by your own service, but strengthens this conviction."

Commodore Wood served as Fleet-Surgeon for the East India Squadron from 1856 to 1858 taking part during this service in the Chinese War, being on board the Flagship with Commodore Armstrong and Admiral Foote during the capture of the four Barrier Forts on the Canton River which was the decisive battle. He had various other services and another one of particular interest being the time he was Fleet-Surgeon with the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron

information I received at that time, and which induced me to proceed
 directly to California, and upon my own responsibility to the possession
 of that country. I have always considered the performance of your journey
 to Mexico at that time as an extraordinary feat, requiring great
 courage of mind and address. How you escaped from the hands of an enemy's
 army, and such a people has always been a wonder to me and has been so
 considered on all occasions.

That country -- connected with this remarkable house is a man
 whose name the great State of California and in fact the whole of the
 West would not have been a part of our country. The Chairman of the
 and Committee of the Senate commented upon William Maxwell Wood's valuable
 service in the following words: "Every intelligent mind must at once
 recognize the importance of the service which you have rendered the country,
 in your personal interest in traveling through the heart of the enemies'
 country, communicating with your military superior and furnishing him with
 a safe and other valuable information upon which he based the
 foundation of California. The importance of this acquisition can best be
 illustrated by asking ourselves, what would have been our actual position in
 the Pacific and upon our Oregon frontier had Great Britain, instead of
 ourselves, acquired permanent position in 1847. I always considered that the
 position constitutes one of the navy's strongest claims upon the gratitude
 of the Nation, and this Emperor in its history, furnished by your own service,
 is a magnificent contribution."

Commodore Wood served as Fleet-Surgeon for the East India Squadron
 in 1856 to 1858 during part during this service in the Chinese War, being
 aboard the Flagship with Commodore Armstrong and Admiral Foote during the
 capture of the Fort. Barker Fort on the Canton River which was the decisive
 battle. He has various other services and another one of particular interest
 at the time he was Fleet-Surgeon with the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron

during the rebellion at which time he was on board the flagship Minnesota in the first battle of the Ironclads - the Monitor with the Merrimac and other vessels of the Confederate Squadron. At the time he retired in 1871 he was Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

In all of the official biographies of William Maxwell Wood there is one period of his service with the Navy which is passed over insignificantly with these words "Special duty, 1834 to 1837". It is during this period that our fabulous house comes again into the picture for in this house is a letter bearing on this period of his service which not only has historical significance to Vigo County but has a National and even International value.

I want to take this opportunity to read to you one of the letters of Commodore Wood written during this period of special duty which has never been published in any of the articles relating to his work and life, and which has never heretofore been given any publicity. This letter is contemporaneous with the history of this house and rightly belongs in it. It was written Aug. 12, 1834 -- which you will note was just shortly before the death of Major Dewees -- and was written aboard the "U.S. Frigate, Independence" and addressed "My dear Mother". It reads:

"On the morning of July 28th in the Gulf of Finland, we descried approaching us and stretching across the direction in which we were sailing, a long, regular line of sail. They proved to be the Russian Fleet of thirteen vessels, eight of them being Ships of the Line. They presented one of the most imposing sights I have ever witnessed on the ocean. A moderate breeze gradually blew us near to each other in an easy and dignified manner becoming both the Native fleet and the Stranger it welcomed to these waters.

At a proper distance we made our bow to the Russian flag by a salute of thirteen guns which was immediately returned from the leader Ship, a fine three decker bearing the Admiral's Flag.

Upon making my way to the deck early the next morning, I found our ship in the condition of a Man of War entering a port. All the deck officers and crew at their respective stations, the pilot giving the course; the leads man in the chains announcing in measured note the depth of water, after each cast of the lead. The idlers, purser, Captain of Marines, Chaplain, etc, from the most advantageous position they could obtain making their observations and remarks upon the new

during the rebellion at which time he was on board the Flagship Minnesota in the first battle of the Isthmus - the Monitor with the Harriet and other vessels of the Confederate Squadron. At the time he retired in 1871 he was Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

In all of the official biographies of William Russell Wood there is one period of his service with the Navy which is passed over insignificantly with these words "Special duty, 1834 to 1837". It is during this period that our Labrador nurse comes again into the picture for in this house is a letter bearing on this period of his service which not only has historical significance to Vice County but has a National and even International value. I want to take this opportunity to read to you one of the letters at Commander Wood's written during this period of special duty which has never been published in any of the articles relating to his work and life, and which has never before been given any publicity. This letter is contemporaneous with the history of this house and rightly belongs in it. It was written Aug. 12, 1834 - which you will note was just shortly before the death of Major Powell - and was written about the U.S. Frigate, Independence, and addressed to dear Mother". It reads:

On the morning of July 25th in the Gulf of Mexico, we discovered approaching us and stretching across the horizon in which we were sailing, a long, regular line of sail. They proved to be the Russian Fleet of thirteen vessels, eight of them being ships of the line. They presented one of the most imposing sights I have ever witnessed on the ocean. A moderate breeze gradually blew us near to each other in an easy and dignified manner becoming both the Native Fleet and the stranger it welcomed to these waters.

At a proper distance we made our bow to the Russian flag by a salute of thirteen guns which was immediately returned from the leader ship, a fine three decker bearing the Admiral's flag.

Upon making my way to the deck early the next morning I found our ship in the condition of a Man of War entering a port. All the deck officers and crew at their respective stations, the pilot giving the course; the lookers men in the chains surrounding in measured rows the depth of water, after each cast of the lead. The illness, Purser, Captain of Marines, Chaplain, etc, from the most advantageous position they could obtain making their observations and remarks upon the war

objects and scenes before them. In a short time we were anchored off Christobel in the middle of numerous and elegant Russian men of war, of all sizes, from schooners up to three-deckers.

Our anchor had little more than reached its bed, and the litter was scarcely cleaned up, when a handsome man of war-looking and richly ornamented ocean boat drew near to our ship and a large barge with many officers in it left her and pulled to us. The barge was steered by a person wearing a white cape with a crimson band. After all the officers had reached our deck, where they were received by the Commodore, and asked into the cabin, the individual who had steered the barge came on board and sauntered about the ship alone. I regarded him with attention and will describe to you his appearance. His frame was over 6 feet in height, erect, powerful and well proportioned; a somewhat full, regular featured and agreeable face with a lively, keen blue eye, the whole having an expression of calm, cool determination and active energy, particularly about the slightly compressed mouth which was over hung by a white mustache. His dress fitted him well and was composed of an olive frock coat destitute of ornament other than a small red cord around the cuff and edges, light blue pantaloons with a similar red cord around the seams, and the snow-white crimson banded cape above mentioned.

Instead of following the officers to the more showy and parlour-like parts of the ship, he crossed his hands behind him, and walked forward among the men, examining them minutely. As he returned to the quarter-deck he stopped to look at the marine guard and taking a musket from one of them, he closely inspected it, opening the lock, drawing the ramrod and then noticing one of the ladders which led to the lower deck and apartments, he unceremoniously and quickly stepped down it and proceeded then to every part of the ship. You will wonder why I have been thus minute in describing this individual until I tell you he was the Emperor Nicholas, Autocrat of all the Russians — the unlimited ruler of sixty millions of beings, with every head from that of the slave to the nobleman, at his disposal; commander of an army numbering more than a half a million of men, and Patriarch of the Greek or National Church, — in all, the most powerful monarch in the world.

To see him is to read the rapid march of his nation, not long ago in a State of barbarism, and now rivalling all others in elegance and richness.

That — nothing may be lost — he is himself a practical man, a sailor and an Engineer. If anything worthy of adoption exists on our ship, it has been noticed and will belong to the Russian Navy; but from the appearance of his Ships, I am inclined to think he is as well able to teach, as fit to learn. After he left the ship we gave him a salute, during which he stood by himself on the wheel-house of the steam boat looking steadily at us, and as the boat was near, our leads flew past him with a great force. Immediately upon the conclusion of the salute, he ran up the American Flag on board the steam boat while it was returned from one of his

objects and scenes before him. In a short time we were surrounded
off. Christened in the middle of numerous and elegant Russian men
of war, of all classes, from soldiers up to three-deckers.

Our anchor had little more than touched the bottom, and
the latter was actually cleaned up, when a handsome man of
very-looking and richly ornamented coat first drew near to our
ship and a large party with many officers in it left her and
joined to us. The party was headed by a person wearing a
white cape with a crimson band. After all the officers had
reached our deck, where they were received by the Commodore,
and asked into the cabin, the individual who had started the
large mass on board and mentioned about the ship's name. I
regarded him with attention and will describe to you his
appearance. His frame was over 6 feet in height, broad,
powerful and well proportioned; a somewhat full, regular
featured and agreeable face with a lively, keen blue eye, the
whole having an expression of calm, cool determination and
active energy, particularly about the slightly compressed
mouth which was overhung by a white mustache. His dress
fitted him well and was composed of an olive frock coat
beset with ornaments other than a small red cord around the
collar and a sash, light blue pantaloons with a similar red cord
around the seams, and the most white cravat banded above
mentioned.

Instead of following the officers to the more showy
and parlour-like parts of the ship, he crossed his hands behind
him, and walked forward across the main, examining them minutely.
In his return to the quarter-deck he stopped to look at the
main guard and taking a walk from one of them, he closely
inspected it, opening the lock, turning the turned and then
noticing one of the ladders which led to the lower deck and
ascendants, he unconsciously and slightly stepped down it
and proceeded then to every part of the ship. You will wonder
why I have been thus minute in describing this individual until
I tell you he was the Emperor Nicholas, Emperor of all the
Russians — the unlimited ruler of sixty millions of beings,
with every hand from that of the slave to the nobleman, at his
disposal; commander of an army numbering more than a half a
million of men; and Patriarch of the Greek or Russian Church.
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practical man, a sailor and an engineer. It is hardly worthy
of adoption exists on our ship. It has been noticed and will
belong to the Russian Navy; but from the appearance of his
ship, I am inclined to think he is as well able to teach as
to learn. After he left the ship we gave him a salute,
during which he stood by himself on the wheel-house of the
steamer, looking steadily at us, and as the boat was near,
our heads flew past him with a great force. Immediately upon
the completion of the salute, he ran up the Russian flag on
board the steamer boat while he was returned from one of his

frigates, and then he announced his presence to his various ships, by hoisting the imperial flag, at the sight of which commenced a simultaneous firing from every man of war (about twelve) in the harbor, and from the forts on shore roar followed roar, and the whole atmosphere was clouded with smoke.

In the course of the day, the Emperor sent us an invitation to visit his palace of Peterhoff, about nine miles distant, to ride through the gardens and view the splendid water works, which play only during his presence, representing every possible device from animals to trees in full foliage with every leaf a crystal jet of water; and to conclude the day by attending the Emperor's private Opera. The day appointed was Sunday; but when the steam boat which was for his guests arrived, our ship poured forth a goodly array of officers, in all the paraphernalia of full dress, swords and cocked hats. The temptations to visit the splendors of Peterhoff prevailed against scruples of conscience, and inclination justified itself by the plea of a seldom occurring opportunity and the maxim of "In Rome" etc.

W. M. W. "

There are many more letters reposing in this house which are rich in historical value and which have been made available to me. They have never been given any publicity before.

Margaret Preston, or Maggie, as she was affectionately known by all her friends, lived in this house all her life. Her letters and mementoes are here. Among these letters are two I would like to read to you. They are frivolous in places — but only recording the spirit of the youth in the period they portray. They are valuable historically and have local significance because they are the letters written by the daughters of Col. Thomas H. Nelson who was another one of the distinguished sons of Terre Haute.

When Abraham Lincoln was selected to the Presidency of the United States he appointed Col. Nelson from Terre Haute as Minister to Chile to represent the United States of America. He held that post from 1861 to 1866 and was then appointed Minister to Mexico in 1869 resigning in 1873. It was during his tenure in Chile that his daughters, both friends of Maggie Preston wrote these letters. The first was written October 14, 1861 to Maggie by Harriet S. Nelson from Santiago. She says:

trigates, and then he announced his presence to his various allies by painting the Imperial flag, at the night at which commenced a simultaneous firing from every man of war (about twelve) in the harbor, and from the forts on shore that followed year, and the whole atmosphere was clouded with smoke.

In the course of the day, the Emperor sent an invitation to visit his palace of Peterhoff, about nine miles distant, to ride through the gardens and view the splendid water works, which play only during his presence, representing every possible device from animals to trees in full foliage with every leaf a crystal jet of water, and to conclude the day by attending the Emperor's private Opera. The day appointed was Monday, but when the steam boat which was for his guests arrived, our ship poured forth a goodly array of officers, in all the paraphernalia of full dress, swords and cocked hats. The invitation to visit the apartments of Peterhoff provided against surprise of a court-martia, and the invitation invited itself by the idea of a "In Room" etc. and the notion of "In Room" etc.

W. H. V.

There are many more letters resting in this house which are rich in historical value and which have been made available to me. They have never been given any publicity before.

Margaret Preston, or Maggie, as she was affectionately known by all her friends, lived in this house all her life. Her letters and manuscripts are here. Among these letters are two I would like to read to you. They are treasured in places — but only receiving the spirit of the youth in the period they portray. They are valuable historically and have local significance because they are the letters written by the daughters of Col. Thomas H. Nelson who was another one of the distinguished sons of Terre Haute.

When Abraham Lincoln was elected to the Presidency of the United States he appointed Col. Nelson from Terre Haute as Minister to Chile to represent the United States of America. He held that post from 1861 to 1866 and was then appointed Minister to Mexico in 1869 resigning in 1873. It was during his tenure in Chile that his daughters, both friends of Maggie Preston wrote these letters. The first was written October 14, 1861 to Maggie by Harriet H. Nelson from Santiago. She says:

"Santiago De Chile October 14th, 1861.

Dearest Maggie,

Excuse me for not writing to you by the last mail as I did to a great many of my friends in Terre Haute but I had not the time to write to you all at the same time. We arrived here four weeks ago and I am delighted with the beautiful city of Santiago, it is a very large place as it contains "One hundred and fifty thousands of inhabitants", and I am convinced it is the most beautiful place in this world. There are also some of the handsomest residences here I ever saw and I think they are superior to the elegant houses in New York on Fifth Avenue. The people here are as handsome as they can be, especially the "Young Gentlemen", they all have teeth like pearls, hair as black as jet and curly and all of them have splendid forms and splendid mustaches. Some of them are light complected, while others are Brunettes. I am sitting by my window and writing and every Gentleman looks like a picture that passes by. The only thing I don't like about Chile is how the poor and lower classes are buried. I will try and describe to you the way in which they are buried. There are very large holes dug and when any of these poor creatures die they are thrown in like perfect beasts and without any filling and these holes are never covered up until they get filled and they are not allowed to be buried in coffins. One day Pa took us all to this Grave Yard, as we had the curiosity to go and as we were walking along we would come across bones, locks of hair, skulls and everything terrific to the human eye. Walking on a little further we came to a horrible big hole, wondering what was in it we glanced our eyes downward when to our utter astonishment we saw an infant down there dead without anything over it but a little white Gown, which doubtless had been put on by its parents. The natives here all rejoice when an infant dies as they know it has gone to a better place than this and they usually have a grand dancing party and dress the infant up in fine style and paint its cheeks and lips. I don't see how they could be so cruel but they think it is only right they should do so. After these poor people have been buried for several years they are dug up and fresh ones put in their places.

Mag. I experienced my first earth quake Sunday a week ago and I will tell you how it came. I felt as if some(one) was knocking on the floor as hard as they (could) and it would become greater every moment. At last the Glass commenced to jostle about and everything else in the room which would possibly did so. I was not much frightened but I can assure you the sensation is anything but a pleasant one for there is no knowing but what the earth might open and swallow us up and you know that would not be so pleasant. Next Saturday some Young Gentlemen and our family are going out on an excursion trip and we expect to be gone for several days at which time I am going to learn to ride on Horseback and I expect to have a splendid time as the Young Gents who are going are very pleasant and agreeable.

I would love to see you all so much but as wishing wont bring you to me I remain content until the expiration of the four years when I hope to see all my friends again but I suppose some

Dear Mr. [unclear]

Excuse me for not writing to you by the last mail as I did to a great many of my friends in New York but I had not the time to write to you all at the same time. We arrived here four weeks ago and I am delighted with the beautiful city of Santiago. It is a very large place as it contains "one hundred and fifty thousands of inhabitants", and I am convinced it is the most beautiful place in the world. There are also some of the finest restaurants here I ever saw and I think they are superior to the elegant houses in New York on Fifth Avenue. The people here are as handsome as they can be, especially the "young gentlemen", they all have teeth like pearls, hair as black as jet and only all of them have splendid forms and splendid manners. Some of them are light complexioned, while others are brunettes. I am sitting by my window and writing and every gentleman looks like a prince that passes by. The only thing I don't like about Chile is how the poor and lower classes are treated. I will try and describe to you the way in which they are treated. There are very large police bars and when any of these poor creatures die they are thrown in like garbage barrels and without any killing and these noises are never covered up until they are killed and they are not allowed to be buried in a coffin. One day he took an all to this grave yard, as we had the courtesy to go and as we were waiting along we would come across bones, heads of bats, skulls and everything terrible to the human eye. Walking on a little further we came to a horrible big hole, wondering what was in it we glanced our eyes downward then to our utter astonishment we saw an infant down there dead without anything over it but a little white cloth which children had been put on by the parents. The natives have all respect when an infant dies as they know it has gone to a better place than this and they usually have a grand dancing party and dress the infant up in fine style and paint its cheeks and lips. I don't see how they could be so cruel but they think it is only right they should do so. After these poor people have been buried for several years they are dug up and fresh ones put in their places.

Well, I experienced my first earthquake Sunday a week ago and I will tell you how it came. I felt as if some (one) was knocking on the floor as hard as they (could) and it would become greater every moment. At last the glass commenced to jostle about and everything else in the room which would possibly do so. I was not much frightened but I can assure you the sensation is anything but a pleasant one for there is no knowing but what the earth might open and swallow us up and you know that would not be so pleasant. Next Saturday some young gentlemen and our family are going out on an excursion trip and we expect to be gone for several days at which time I am going to look in on Hornsback and I expect to have a splendid time at the Young Gentle who are going are very pleasant and agreeable.

I would love to see you all so much but as wishing you bring you to me I remain content until the expiration of the four years when I hope to see all my friends again but I suppose some

of you will be married and perhaps myself for all we know. I often recall the many happy hours we have spent together. I remember how much I enjoyed myself the day we spent at your house and do you remember the night you and Nell Donaldson spent with me and how much fun we had writing to some boys across the street. I remember it as well as though it were yesterday.

Please excuse this penmanship and all of the mistakes which you may come across. Write to me very soon and tell me about my friends in Terre Haute. Give my love to Co Donnelly, Hall Earley, Sis Turner, Nellie Donaldson, Mamie Clippinger, Carrie and Sallie, Abbie and Jemima. Sue Potter and all the rest of friends. All of the family send a great deal of love to you and your Ma and Pa.

Write soon and accept much love

From your affectionate and loving friend

Harriet S. Nelson

P.S. We have just received the dispatch containing Jefferson Davis's Death, poor fellow but I suppose it is better he should be out of this world as he has caused so much trouble. I hope to hear from you very soon. Mary is about going crazy on the strength of poor Jeff's death and she has her lap full of nuts and says she is eating them over his funeral and hollering hurrah for Jeff for he has gone down to glory. I must close this now.

Har. Nel.

While you write to me please address as follows:

Harriet S. Nelson, Legation of the United States,
Santiago de Chile, South America

The mail has just arrived and I hope I find a letter from some of my friends.

Hat. "

The other letter is written by Col. Nelson's other daughter Mary B. Nelson and is dated Nov. 12, 1862 - a year after the first letter. It says:

"My dearest Maggie,

Your letter of the 7th of August was received on the 12th of October and I was very much delighted to see your punctuality in answering letters. I will profit by your example hereafter. I have been very much occupied since the receipt of your dear little letter and if you will write very often I will always answer punctually. I have been to many balls and parties during the last month and feel somewhat worn out. We have had plenty amusement this Spring for the Martinettes and Royal Troop have been here and played for a month and the Hanlon Lee Brothers are here now. The whole city is wild about them; balls and parties have been given to them until we are all tired and the

of you will be married and perhaps myself for all we know.
I often recall the many happy hours we have spent together.
I remember how much I enjoyed myself the day we spent at your
house and how you remember the night you and Nell Donahue
spent with me and how much fun we had writing to some boys
across the street. I remember it as well as though it were
yesterday.

Please excuse this penmanship and all of the
mistakes which you may come across. Write to me very soon
and tell me about my friends in Terre Haute. Give my love
to Co. Donahue, Bill Bailey, Ed Turner, Nellie Donahue,
Nellie O'Donoghue, Corrie and Nellie, Annie and Emma. The
father and all the rest of friends. All of the family send
a great deal of love to you and your mother and father.

With love and respect from your
father

From your affectionate and loving friend

Harriet B. Nelson

P.S. We have just received the dispatch containing letters
David's death. Now follow me I suppose it is better he should
be out of this world as he has caused so much trouble. I hope
to hear from you very soon. Mary is about going away on the
strength of your letter and she has her full of love
and says she is writing them over the river and following
through for her for he has gone down to glory. I want close

Har. Nel.

While you write to me please address as follows:
Harriet B. Nelson, Legation of the United States,
Santiago de Chile, South America

The mail has just arrived and I hope I like letter from some
of my friends.

The other letter is written by Col. Nelson's other daughter
Mary B. Nelson and is dated Nov. 12, 1863 - a year after the first
letter. It says:

Your letter of the 10th of August was received on the 12th
of October and I was very much delighted to see your letter.
I will write you very soon. I will write you very soon.
I have been very much occupied since the receipt of your dear
little letter and it you will write very often I will always
answer immediately. I have been to many balls and parties during
the last month and feel somewhat worn out. We have had plenty
amusement this evening for the Martinis and Royal Troop have
been here and played for a month and the Union Lee Brothers
are here now. The whole city is wild about them; balls and the
parties have been given to them until we are all tired and the

President presented them with a very handsome gold medal apiece and the young gentlemen and ladies make them presents of magnificent bouquets and crowns of gold and silver wheat. I go every Thursday and Sunday to the Theatre to see them perform. It is the most wonderful thing I ever witnessed to see William Hanlon go across an immense Theatre like the one here in three jumps, he seems to fly through the air. Their performances are wonderful. At their first performance four ladies fainted. All of the young ladies have nearly gone crazy about them. I like George the best and Hattie likes Alfred; William and Thomas are very much liked also, they have been here three weeks but they are going away next week to our great disappointment.

In the "dies-i-ooho" or during the week that they celebrate the Independence of Chile which was gained on the 18th of September 1810 I enjoyed myself very much. The whole city assumed a new dress, and the streets were decked with flags and flowers and at night seemed but a blaze of fire as every house was illuminated and the "Canada-cro" ground promenade was filled with flowers and flags and the statues were superbly ornamented. It will take too long to describe to you in this letter all that (took) place in that week and I will defer it until another time for I have written six letters this morning and I am obliged to have this one finished in half an hour. I am very sorry to hear that your brother was wounded and also that John Ball had shown the "white feather". My poor country, I mourn for thee. Although I am so far away from the battlefield yet I feel for the men that fall as much as you possible can who are so near. The last news we had from home was glorious but I look forward with a trembling heart for the news which is to come in an hour. The steamer has just arrived in Valparaiso and we will have our dispatches very soon. I only hope that none of my dear Uncles have fallen or any of my friends.

This is our second month in Spring and the weather is delightful but a little later the weather becomes very warm. We are all going to the "Baños de Caucaenes" one of the fashionable watering places to spend the summer. Expect to enjoy myself very much.

Maggie, it seems that you are the only one out of my many friends in Terre Haute who has not forgotten us for I have received but two letters in one year from there while in Kentucky I received dozens. I believe in the old saying "that out of sight, out of mind". Please give my love to all of them and say if they wish me to recognize them when I return to the States, they had better write to me. I have but a moment more to spare and hoping that you are all well and with much love from my own family to yours, I am and shall ever be

Your affectionate friend

Mary B. Nelson

P.S. We have just received the sad news of my dear Uncle William's death. We have not heard yet how it occurred, the dispatch only says that he was killed by J. C. Davis. O I shall hate that man and all connected with him from this day until the end.

President presented them with a very handsome gold medal apiece and the young gentlemen and ladies make them presents of magnificent brooches and crowns of gold and silver what I go every Thursday and Sunday to the theatre to see them perform. It is the most wonderful thing I ever witnessed to see William Hinton to secure an immense theatre like the one here in three jumps, he seems to fly through the air. Their performances are wonderful. At their first performance four ladies landed. All of the young ladies have nearly gone away about them. I like George the best and little likes Alfred; William and Thomas are very much liked also, they have been here three weeks but they are going very next week to our great disappointment.

In the "Star-4-noon" or during the week that they celebrate the Independence of Chile which was gained on the 18th of September 1810 I enjoyed myself very much. The whole city adorned a new dress, and the streets were decked with flags and flowers and it might be said that a dance of this kind every house was illuminated and the "Quadrille" ground gymnastics was filled with flowers and flags and the statues were superbly ornamented. It will take too long to describe so you in this letter all that (I took) place in that week and I will defer it until another time for I have written six letters this morning and I am obliged to have this one finished in half an hour. I am very sorry to hear that your brother was wounded and also that John Hall had given the "white feather". My poor country, I mourn for thee. Although I am so far away from the battlefield yet I feel for the men that fall as much as you possible can who are so near. The last news we had from home was glorious but I look forward with a trembling heart for the news which is to come in an hour. The uterine has just arrived in Valparaiso and we will have our dispatches very soon. I say I hope that some of my dear Uncle have fallen or any of my friends.

This is our second month in Spring and the weather is delightful but a little later the weather becomes very warm. We are all going to the "Paseo de Camarones" one of the fashionable watering places to spend the summer. Expect to enjoy yourself very much.

Maybe, it seems that you are the only one out of my many friends in Terre Haute who has not forgotten us for I have received but two letters in one year from here while in Kentucky I received dozens. I believe in the old saying "that out of sight, out of mind". Please give my love to all of them and say if they wish me to recognize them when I return to the States, they had better write to me. I have but a moment more to spare and hoping that you are all well and with much love from my own family to yours, I am and shall ever be

Your affectionate friend

Mary B. Nelson

P.S. We have just received the sad news of my dear Uncle William's death. We have not heard yet how it occurred, the dispatch only says that he was killed by J. C. Davis. O I shall hate that man and all connected with him from this day until the end.

Yours etc etc

M. B. W.

I send you a letter that Hattie wrote to you sometime since but was too late for the last mail so I will send it in mine to make assurance double sure."

Also a part of the heritage of this house are many memories and mementoes of the Civil War. I want to read to you two more letters written by a youth, George A. Graff to his boyhood friend William W. Preston who was then living in this house. These letters have never been given any previous publicity and have never been published. They throw a new and intimate light on the Civil War and are interesting from several angles to the people of Terre Haute.

George A. Graff was a member of the 14th Regiment of the Indiana Volunteers Company F. His first letter was written August 14, 1863, and is written from a camp near Elk Run, Virginia. The letter is on bluish white double paper ruled with blue lines and contained in small bright yellow envelope addressed to Mr. William W. Preston, Terre Haute, Indiana. The envelope has a Washington 3¢ stamp in the right hand corner -- a stamp of the series of 1861. It is cancelled with a circular stamp reciting "Washington D.C. Aug. 18", He writes:

"Friend William:

I received your kind letter and now I am going to try to answer it if I can; We are incamped at what is called Elk-Ville or Elk Run, Va. There is but one brigade here with us, there was two at first but they moved day before yesterday. Where they went I know not, but in all there is one division of the 2nd Army Corps here and it is the 3rd division and it is divided off into Regts and brigades, and they are stationed on different roads, in order to keep the Cavalry from making raids in our rear on Washington junction.

I see that you speak about the battle of Gettesburgh, as to it being of more importance to us than Antietam I do not think that it was for the reason that we did not attach them, but as to attacking them we did the first day and they whipped us bad, but that night our men fell back to a better position so the next day the rebels attached us on our ground and we repulsed them every time but if we had attached them on there ground, they would have whipped us shure for where they drove our men the first days fight was high ground like that at Fredricksburgh, and the reason I know that they would have whipped us and had a good position was from

Yours etc etc

M. B. W.

I send you a letter that I wrote to you sometime since but was too late for the last mail so I will send it in mine to make assurance double sure.

Also a part of the baggage of this house are many memories and

reminders of the Civil War. I want to send to you two more letters

written by a youth, George A. Drift to his boyhood friend William W.

Prescott who was then living in this house. These letters have never

been given any previous publicity and have never been published. They

throw a new and interesting light on the Civil War and are interesting from

several angles to the people of these States.

George A. Drift was a member of the 15th Regiment of the Indiana

Volunteers Company F. His first letter was written August 14, 1863, and

is written from a camp near Elk Run, Virginia. The letter is on lined

white double paper ruled with blue lines and contained in small bright

yellow envelope addressed to Mr. William W. Prescott, Terre Haute, Indiana.

The envelope has a Washington 3¢ stamp in the right hand corner — a stamp

of the series of 1861. It is cancelled with a circular stamp reading

Washington D.C. Nov. 1861. No witness.

Richard Williams

I received your kind letter and now I am going to try to answer it if I can. We are incamped at what is called Elm-Ville or Elm Run, Va. There is but one bridge here with us, there was two at first but they moved away before yesterday. Where they went I know not, but in all there is one division of the 2nd Army Corps here and it is the 3rd division and it is divided off into Regts and brigades, and they are stationed on different roads, in order to keep the Rebels from making raids in our rear on Washington Junction. I see that you speak about the battle of Gettysburg, as to its being of more importance to us than Antietam I do not think that it was for the reason that we did not attack them, but as to attacking them we did the first day and they whipped us bad, but that night our men fell back to a better position so the next day the Rebels attacked us on our ground and we repulsed them every time but it was not until they drove our men the third day that they whipped us worse for where they drove our men the first day I know was high ground like that at Gettysburg, and the reason I know that they would have whipped us and had a good position was from

the way they acted, every time they would make an attempt to break our lines and get repulsed they would fall back some distance in order to draw us out and then if they got us out they intended to fall back to there picked ground, but all we tried to do was hold our lines.

And there was another way that I new that they had picked ground to fight on was after they had commenced to retreat there Infantry and all of there Artillery fell back on high rising ground just on the other side of Gettesburgh. But Gen. Meade stated in the papers that the rebels had to fight him on his own ground, but there is one thing shure if we had attacked the rebels and had whipped them on there own ground as bad as we did on ours, we would have got more prisoners of them than we did; so you can see that it was not Gen. Meade's intention to attach them or follow them up there with his main band of the Army or he would have done it, and another thing if he had the rebels would have drawn up there men as if they was going to fight on that ground and then we would have had to lay there perhaps two days longer to get things ready to make another fight and by that time they would have got there road clear, and so it was better the way it was, and not only that they had been whipping us every fight until that and you can see for yourself that it was better to let them come to us than for us to go to them at that time.

William you want to know if I see Nat Eddy you say that belongs to Stewarts old Cavalry. (I have not).

William how does the Conscription act go on ther now. Nothing more at present but I remain your friend ever more.

George A. Graff

William I don't believe I told you in my other letter that I saw Doctor Read at Williams-Port, M. D. I did and asked him about John the doctor said that Johnney was in the army down in Ky."

His next letter is dated Tuesday, November 12, 1863 and is written from a Camp South of Rappahannock River, Virginia. The letter is on bluish white paper ruled with blue lines -- the paper a large double sheet. It is in a small bright yellow envelope addressed to Mr., William W. Preston, Terre Haute, Indiana. It has a Washington 3¢ stamp in right hand corner, of the series of 1861. The cancellation stamp recites "Washington, D.A.R. November 15th", and has stamped on envelope "Advertised".

It reads:

"Friend William:

I expect you have begin to think I have give up writing to you any more; I would have wrote long ago but I had

the way they acted, every time they would make an attempt to break
our lines and get repulsed they would fall back some distance in
order to draw us out and then if they got us out they intended to
fall back to those broken ground, but all we tried to do was hold
our lines.

And there was another way that I saw that they had planned
ground to fight on was after they had commenced to retreat there
infantry and all of these Artillery fell back on high rising ground
just on the other side of Gettysburg. But Gen. Meade stated in
the papers that the rebels had no light men on his own ground, but
there is one thing sure if we had attached the rebels and had
whipped them on there own ground as had as we did on ours, we
would have got more prisoners of them than we did; so you can see
that it was not Gen. Meade's intention to attach them or follow
them up there with his main band of the Army or he would have done
it, and another thing if he had the rebels would have driven up
there men as if they were going to fight on that ground and then we
would have had to lay there perhaps two days longer to get things
ready to make another fight and by that time they would have got
there road clear, and so it was better the way it was, and not only
that they had been whipping us every light until that and you can
see for yourself that it was better to let them come to us than for
us to go to them at that time.

William you want to know if I see that I say that
belongs to Stewart's old Cavalry. (I have not).

William how does the Constitution not go on then now.
Nothing more at present but I remain your friend ever more.

George A. Wall

William I don't believe I told you in my other letter that I saw
Doctor Reed at Williams-Port, M. D. I did and asked him about
John the doctor said that Johnny was in the army down in Ky.

His next letter is dated Tuesday, November 12, 1863 and is
written from a Camp South of Rappahannock River, Virginia. The letter
is on pinkish white paper ruled with blue lines — the paper a large
double sheet. It is in a small bright yellow envelope addressed to
Mr. William W. Preston, Terre Haute, Indiana. It has a Washington 3c
stamp in right hand corner, of the series of 1861. The cancellation
stamp reads "Washington, D.C. November 15th", and has stamped on
envelope "advertisers".

It reads:

Friend William:
I expect you have begun to think I have given up
writing to you my name; I would have wrote long ago but I had

new stamps, but I will try to commence a letter to you if I don't manage to finish it. For the last two or three days I have that diarrhea and now it has turned into the fever, and I just feel bad and well enough to try to write a few lines or do something to pass away time.

William I would like to have got to stay at New York for about two or three weeks more and I think I would have saw my funn out but the way it was I did not; but perhaps I will get back there again if I do I want you I see my funn out. If I had stayed there three more days I would have seen one of the hottest times ever I saw in my life I do believe for the reason I found out some young ladies in Williamsburgh that I used to know at Terre Haute I would tell you there names but you would not now them anyway, some way I had and saw all my funn in the last three days.

I would tell you more about New York but it wont do to tell you all in one or two letters, for the reason I write to long a letter any way every time to your short ones. I would write more but I want to say a few words about our March from Culpepper C. H. to Centerville.

I will now try to write you as near as possible about our retreat from Robertson run to Centerville. I will commence back at Saturday Oct. 9th/63 at which I was on picket we got orders or at least the officers did to draw in the pickets of which we did not understand at first until we went to where the brig was and then we found out that the Jonothens was on the move to and trying to cut flank us. The same night we evacuated our position at or near Culpepper C. H. and fell back toward is called Bealton Station four or five miles the other side of the Rappahannock. We stayed there until about noon on the 11th of Oct at which time we marched back across the R. and formed into line of battle and advanced three or four miles but not getting any fight out of the enemy or finding him in any force we recross the river the third or fourth time and marched for Centerville which was the 12th. The night of the 12th we was surrounded although we went to bed about ten or eleven o'clock in the night, and then had to get up about three again in the morning and march on and all at once we came to a halt long enough to get breakfast, but did not now or understand such movements till the first thing boom, boom. then we new that the Jonothens was trying to get our wagon train. Our caverly was fighting like the very devil just in front of us, so our regt was deployed out as skirmishers in order to support the Cavalry if the Jonnothons should advance in force but they did not come, so we rallied and formed the regt and fell back about a half miles we done so twice and both times had to wade a stream about knee deep. We was the rear guard of the infantry on that road, but at least we got back to within about three or four miles of Bealton Station at which place the rebels and our men were having it up and down with cannon, so we marched up within about a mile and a half of Bealton Station and formed into line of battle behind the R. R. waiting for Jonnothon. Our men placed a battery in position and the rebels tried to silence it but they could not do it from that place so they tried another which was so close that we could hear the rebel officer give the command to load and fire every time although the rebels shot several shots at our battery but ours got range of theirs at last and knocked one of their pieces end over

end at that the rebels stopped, but while the firing was going on we could hear our shots tearing the trees down at a fearful rate. At one time the Capt. of our battery made a tolerable good shot which made the trees fall, and he holered take that over there. I thought I had saw men take things cool but I never saw men take it cooler than they did their, for it seemed as if they did not care at all, just so that they kept the rebels from out flanking us although that was twice we had been out off and then we was surrounded on all sides except one and that was where our advance had cut there way through and in so doing they took some cannon and several hundred prisoners. I thought I had been in tight places but that is what I call running the Cantilit, and then we did not get the chance of firing a shot, but was just on the point of doing it once or twice, at this time the rebels was about six or eight deep in front and three officers there urging them on and telling them that there was nothing but a wagon train and guards, and saying now boys give the yell and then charge and all is ours, there was but one man yelled and another said I now better for I saw twenty thousand men pass there, but they did not come and as soon as dark we crept out of that as easy as possible through mud and water to our waists to Centerville next morning after three or four hours sleep we was drawn up into line of battle for the rebels but they did not come in any force only to skirmish a little which they done all day till night when the rebels was gone then our regt with the 8th Ohio had to wade brawd run which reached nearly to our cartridges boxes after advancing about one mile we come back; the next morning we marched for Warrenton stayed there two or three weeks and then marched to this place which suits me very well for the present.

I understand since Les Prater has come back that C.R. Carr one of my old school mates is bossing a big job on some of the streets in Terre Haute.

As I have written a longer letter than I intended to I will stop for this time now more at present.

George A. Graff
14th regt. Ind. Vols
Company F
Via Washington, D.C. "

There are only a few of the treasures contained in this fabulous old house.

Throughout the house, now, are articles of furniture, glassware, pictures, books and other articles representing every period of its occupancy back to its beginning. The rooms are so large that these massive solid walnut and cherry bookcases, dressers, tables and other articles do not seem as large as they really are. In the downstairs pantry, is a large solid cherry storage bin about six feet long with four

and of that the rebels stopped, but while the firing was going on we could hear our shots falling the trees down at a fearful rate. At one time the light of our battery made a splendid glow and which made the trees fall, and he believed that that was the case. I thought I had now taken things cool but I never saw him take it cooler than they did then, for he seemed as if they did not care at all, and so that they kept the rebels from our flanking on either side and so that we had been cut off and then we were surrounded on all sides except one and that was where our advance had cut their way through and in so doing they took some cannon and several hundred prisoners. I thought I had been in tight places but that is what I call running the Gamble, and then we did not get the chance of killing a shot, but was just on the point of being it once or twice, at this time the rebels were about six or eight deep in front and three officers were lying there on and telling them that there was nothing but a wagon train and cavalry, and saying now give the yell and then charge and all is over, there was but one man yelled and another said I have better for I am twenty thousand men here, but they did not come and as soon as dark we crept out of that as easy as possible through mud and water to our water in Centerville and morning after three or four hours sleep we were drawn up into line of battle for the rebels and they did not come in any force only to surround a little while they done all day till night when the rebels was gone then our fight with the 8th Ohio had to make them what we called nearly to our cartridges boxes after advancing about one mile we some back the next morning we marched for Harrison stayed there two or three weeks and then marched to this place which looks very well for the present.

I understand since Lee's letter has come back that G.E. Carr was of my old school is doing a big job in some of the schools in Texas State.

As I have written a longer letter than I intended to I will stop for this time now more at present.

George A. Dray
14th regt. Ind. Vols
Company F
Wm Washington, D.C.

There are only a few of the treasures contained in this fabulous old house. Throughout the house, now, are articles of furniture, glassware, pictures, books and other articles representing every period of the country back to the beginning. The rooms are so large that these massive walls without and chairs, dressers, tables and other articles do not seem as large as they really are. In the downstairs hall, is a large solid cherry staircase with about six feet long with four

compartments for vegetables. An old chest holds a tea and coffee service of fine old pewter and there are cabinets filled with old china and glass. Old lamps - originally burning lard oil - dot the house. Candle snuffers lie around as if just used last night. On a beautiful rich black walnut drop leaf table in the hall there stands an alabaster bowl decorated with carved figures. A most unusual tall book case is in the entrance hall. It reaches nearly to the ceiling of this overly tall room, the lower part being a chest, the top drawer of which hangs over the lower drawers and is supported by separate legs of its own.

The changes made by the Prestons to the house of Major Dewees have not been such that they interfere at all with the historic original. The old plantation has long since been subdivided into lots and numerous houses now occupy the greater portion of the land. About the house as it now is, there is a yard 125 feet by 434 feet — sufficient for a small park.

Landmarks of the past are fast disappearing from our scene. This is one which should not be allowed to disappear. Although the ghost of Matilda Dewees may watch over this house, it is a significant landmark of the glorious past of our community and our country. Let us hope it can be preserved.

Story of 124-Year-Old House Told

To D. A. R. Chapter by John G. Biel

5/14/47

John G. Biel as guest speaker told members of Fort Harrison Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, the story of a 124-year-old house at the garden party meeting of the chapter held yesterday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock at the home of Mrs. E. V. Smith, 1339 Poplar Street. "The Story of a House," as told by Mr. Biel, was the history of the old Preston house where the party was held.

Mrs. Ernest O. Nay, regent, presided at the meeting and introduced Mr. Biel. Following the meeting, refreshments were served with the following members as hostesses: Mrs. Seymour Anderson, chairman; Mrs. Jerome Courtney, Miss Florence Crawford, Miss Mary Lou Dugger, Mrs. George Eck, Mrs. Albert Faurot, Mrs. Julian Goss, Mrs. A. R. Markle, Mrs. Charles Paddock, Mrs. W. Robert Paige, Mrs. George Patton, Mrs. Albert Pfau and Mrs. Dick Whitesell.

Mr. Biel told how the land on which the house was built was purchased on Sept. 13, 1816, just five years after Gen. William Henry Harrison reached the Wea Village, where Terre Haute now stands, and built the famous Fort Harrison. The land was bought for \$1.82 an acre by William Harlow and then sold to George W. Dewees, who obtained a patent from the United States for the land on Sept. 22, 1823. The house is historically significant to Terre Haute and Vigo County, according to Mr. Biel, as it marks, definitely, the beginning of the real building and development of the city.

There were only about 50 houses, including 15 business houses, in the town when the house was started by Dewees in 1823. It was completed in 1826, during which time the town grew and changed. However, the house was a mansion when it was built in the backwoods of the city as the stone for the house was brought by ox cart from a stone quarry owned by Mr. Dewees and believed to be around Turkey Run or Mudlavia. The land at that time took in the territory now bounded by Thirteenth Street on the west, Twentieth Street on the east, Poplar Street on the north and College Avenue on the south. The barn stood on the spot now occupied by St. Patrick's Church.

The unusual construction of the house was told by Mr. Biel as well as the sturdy construction of walls 18 inches thick and growing much wider as they reach the ground, rock foundation seven feet from the walls, floors of black walnut boards tongue and grooved and fitting today as tight and flat as if just laid, rafters and joists of hand-hewn wood put together with wooden pegs and original Adam mantels throughout.

After the death of the Desees son, who was scalped by Indians; the death of Major Desees Nov. 29, 1834, and the disappearance of his

wife, the property passed on to a niece, Elizabeth Patterson, and a sister, Ann Potts, of Schukillhaven, Pa. The estate was not settled until 1841, during those seven years the property having remained vacant. It was eventually purchased by Demas Deming, then president of the Terre Haute Branch Bank, who, in turn, sold it in 1841 to Nathaniel Preston, cashier in the bank.

Nathaniel Preston came to Terre Haute from Vermont and was one of the first teachers at the old brick school. He and his wife lived there the remainder of their lives and reared their family there. Later Margaret Preston and brother lived there until their deaths, at which time it was inherited by Mrs. Natalie Preston Smith, who lives there now.

Mr. Biel concluded his talk with excerpts from interesting letters and mementoes of the Civil War, which are valuable historically, and of descriptions of other interesting articles representing every period of its occupancy which are still in the house. He said:

"It is the story of a house which is rich in tradition and steeped with the history of this city. It is the story of a house which under absolutely no circumstances should be lost to the generations of people of Terre Haute to come. This house is the one and only remaining link which ties today with the period of Terre Haute's growth which it represents and it is most certainly a duty and obligation on the residents of this city and county to do something to preserve this house for posterity. It should be in the custody of some organization such as the D. A. R. or the Vigo County Historical Society, as a sacred trust, to preserve it intact and as it is. Over 124 years have passed since the construction of this house was started and it has withstood time and weather for only one purpose—to link today with yesterday."